



RAJAJI AND GANDHI

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*Published on the occasion of
Rajaji Birth Centenary*

Rajaji and Gandhi

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Shashi Ahluwalia



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To
Meenu, Shobna & Rajesh

Introduction

Having known Rajaji for well over fifty years and having watched with awe and admiration his rock-like strength standing steadfast and unmoved amidst storms of triumph and disaster, I need not apologize for hailing him in public (as I often used to in private) as the Bhishma Pitamaha of the modern age. Without borrowing from Homer (on Odysseus) the generalized epithets appropriate to a hero embodying such wisdom and integrity, I venture to show these qualities in action by recalling some memorable episodes, the first of which alone is public property.

Rajaji's solid contribution to the political education and political progress of India is best illustrated by his demand for "assurances," before the acceptance of office in the provinces by the Congress, in 1937. Gandhiji, by his honest down-to-earth approach to politics, recognized the importance of substantial or organic swaraj (as distinguished from formal or constitutional independence). If there was a genuine desire to transfer power from the people of Great Britain to the people of India,

the transfer could just as well be brought about by an agreed convention between the Governor, the popular Ministries and the people of the provinces as by a specific provision in a British Act of Parliament. The assurances were legal, constitutional and workable and would have brought the substance of self-government in the provincial sphere. But this was suspected to be a 'trap' by British diehards. In one sense it was a trap devised by Rajaji to imprison and utilize the sunlight of free enlightened public life which could have been the common possession of Britain and India. In any case, the signal and singular success of the Congress Ministry in Madras stemmed from the far-sighted constructive genius of the Prime Minister (as the Chief Ministers of the Provinces were then designated). But for the war, the spread of Hindi by consent and the enforcement of Prohibition would have proceeded smoothly in the old Madras Province.

Sri Ramana Maharshi was a very human person whose most endearing quality was *saulabhya*, easy accessibility to everyone at all times. He was like a child ever ready to listen, though sparing of speech. It was in his presence that I learnt the humility to learn, when the time came, not only the Gandhian technique but the poetry that was the power behind it, from Rajaji, himself a pastmaster of both the technique and the power. And he made it clear that the real power behind Gandhi, like that behind Hanuman, was devotion to Rama. In *bhakti* too I had my pupillage under Rajaji when, week after week during my *Indian Express* days, he helped me with loving care to finalize my draft English rendering of his exquisite blend of Valmiki, Kamban and modern sensibility. If it was exhilarating to discuss with him word values and sentence structure, the whole business of studying and Englishing his Tamil masterpiece proved for me a transforming experience, a re-living of the Rama legend which is admittedly the most precious element in the Gandhi legacy. The heroic heart at the heart of the mystery of our humanistic religion is the Indian people's silent subordination of *preyas* to *sreyas*—of material to moral values, for which a common term is *dharma* and the proper name is Rama. This surrender to *dharma* gave this hero his inner strength.

K. SWAMINATHAN

Preface

Among the leaders who led the nation during the last three decades of the struggle for freedom Rajaji was one of the most outstanding. He was, further, so close to Gandhi in his way of life and his spiritual faith that he was widely regarded as the Tamil Gandhi. The two worked at times separately, more often together, for the national cause which was dear to both. To the last, they shared the same hopes and aspirations and dreamt the same lofty dreams.

Rajaji and Gandhi were not born great. They were born in middle class families and were not in any way outstanding in their studies. But they trained themselves to face all risks cheerfully and undergo sufferings gracefully. Their lives were unique examples of unity of thought, word and action. They would not lay down one policy for the leaders and another for the masses. What they preached they practised. That was one of the secrets of their success. They coveted no power no position, no

wealth. And yet they were able to command the respectful obedience of India's millions. Imprisonments and tortures, insults and injuries could not daunt their spirits. It was this fearlessness which they instilled into the hearts of their countrymen and which ultimately led to the success of the struggle for freedom.

Both Rajaji and Gandhi had identified themselves with the masses. They lived like them and for them. It was this self-imposed poverty which endeared them to the people who learnt from them self-reliance and self-respect.

The authors have tried to bring out, the close and complex relationship between Gandhi and Rajaji. They have attempted to show how the Mahatma, India's conscience, and Rajaji, the Mahatma's Conscience Keeper, functioned as a formidable pair, fighting valiantly for a free and self-reliant India, how this relationship stood the test of time weathering many a storm and emerging stronger and sounder after every crisis. The authors hope that their quest to identify and explain the relationship between these two great sons of India will lend special interest to the work.

The authors are grateful to Prof. K. Swaminathan, Chief Editor, and Shri J. P. Uniyal, Deputy Chief Editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi who were good enough to offer useful suggestions and other help.

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The Conscience Keeper

“My conscience keeper” that is how Gandhi described Rajaji. Gandhi and Rajaji met for the first time in 1919 when Gandhi was in Madras at the invitation of Mr Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, the editor of *Hindu*. The man behind the invitation was Rajaji who played host to Gandhi. Rajaji himself had only recently shifted to Madras from Salem, where he was practising as a lawyer since 1900, at the pressing invitation of friends like Kasturi Ranga Iyengar who wanted him to take a more active part in public life.

Of this first meeting with Rajaji Gandhi says : “It was with him (Rajaji) that we had put up in Madras. This discovery I made only after we had stayed with him for a couple of days. For since the bungalow that we were staying in belonged to Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, I was under the impression that we were his guests. Mahadev Desai however corrected me. He very

soon formed acquaintance with Rajagopalachari who, from his innate shyness, kept himself constantly in the background. But Mahadev put me on my guard. 'You should cultivate this man,' he said to me one day. And so I did".

It was a dream that Gandhi had in Rajaji's house one night that sparked off the first act of civil disobedience in India. Gandhi used to discuss with the leaders his plans of starting civil disobedience against the Rowlatt Bills if they were enacted into law. While they were still thinking about the ways and means of fighting together against the Bills they learnt that the Bills had been published as an Act. Gandhiji later recorded it in his *Autobiography* : "That night I fell asleep while thinking over the question. Towards the small hours of the morning I woke up somewhat earlier than usual. I was still in that twilight condition between sleep and consciousness when suddenly the idea broke upon me—it was as if in a dream. Early in the morning I related the whole story to Rajagopalachari. 'The idea came to me last night in a dream that we should call upon the country to observe a general hartal. Satyagraha is a process of self-purification, and ours is a sacred fight and it seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should be commenced with an act of self-purification. Let all the people of India, therefore, suspend their business on that day, and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer. The Mussulmans may not fast for more than one day; so the duration of the fast should be 24 hours. It is very difficult to say whether all the provinces would respond to this appeal of our or not but I feel fairly certain of Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Sindh. I think we should have every reason to feel satisfied even if all these places observe the hartal fittingly.' Rajagopalachari was at once taken up with my suggestion."

So at their very first meeting Rajaji came closer to Gandhi. This coming together of these two great men proved good for the future of our country. Rajaji made it a mission of his life to spread the message of Gandhi whom he called his Master. He was one of his principal lieutenants, perhaps the ablest and the most astute, and there was no matter of any consequence on which Gandhi did not take Rajaji into confidence. Though Rajaji followed the Gandhian way of life in thought, word and action yet he differed from his master in the realm of politics.

But their differences only deepened their mutual love and regard for each other. Rajaji's frank and sincere criticism was appreciated by the master. Even Nehru later acclaimed this quality of Rajaji while unveiling Rajaji's portrait in the Madras Legislative Assembly on 24th June, 1948. Nehru said :

“Rajaji is a person of strong convictions and strong beliefs who has adhered to them. You know he was very much influenced in the early years by Mahatma Gandhi. He accepted basically the approach of Mahatmaji to various problems. Nevertheless, at no time did he become a person who unthinkingly accepted any one's dictum, not even Mahatmaji's. Rajaji would argue with Mahatmaji, debate with him and would not give in easily. Ultimately, however, he gave in because he thought it best under the circumstances to accept Mahatmaji's judgement. Rajaji's faith in Mahatmaji was tremendous but he never allowed his mind to slip away. Whatever happened he came to his own conclusion. But if he did give in to somebody, he did so consciously and deliberately, after arguing the matter. Therefore Rajaji, whether he sometimes disagreed with us or very often agreed with us, brought an extraordinarily keen and analytical mind to bear on every question, that came before us. Whether he agreed or disagreed with us he would like every question to be discussed thoroughly. So we honour tremendously a man like Mahatma Gandhi for what I call the opposite of possessions, titles etc. Likewise we honour Rajaji for his spirit of individuality, service and sacrifice. Rajaji represents fundamentally the highest type of the mind of India.”

Gandhi himself used to praise Rajaji for the courage of his convictions when the latter openly differed from the Master. In the *Harijan* of February 1946 Gandhi wrote about Rajaji's differences of 1942, “Rajaji is one of my oldest friends and was known to be the exponent, in word and deed, of all I stand for. That in 1942, he differed from me, I know. All honour for the boldness with which he publicly avowed the differences.”

Gandhi had great regard for Rajaji's opinion since they came from his beliefs. On July 16, 1925 Gandhi wrote to Rajaji : “Somehow or other I need your letter to feel that all is well with you. My position is this. My body and mind are living

in a world by which I remain unaffected, but in which I am being tried. My soul is living in a world physically away from me, and yet a world by which I am and want to be affected. You are a part of that world and perhaps the nearest to me. My innermost being wants your approbation of what I am doing and thinking. I may not always succeed in getting it but it craves for your verdict."

Gandhi once said, "Rajaji sees at least six months ahead of me."

Rajaji too had great reverence and respect for his master. Rajaji once called Mahatma the *Matsya Avatar* of our age :

Rajaji's love for his Master was so powerful and passionate that he went into raptures when he thought about him. He wrote on 25th October 1956 in his scrap-book : "Others have thought, I myself have thought, the things that Gandhiji thought, sometimes even before he ever put them down for others to read. But the power that enabled him to do what he thought came from Above. So it is I consider him one who had a commission from God, an *Avatar* ! . . . Gandhiji was happy when he was suffering for the sake of other people. All saints are like that. He was made unhappy by the bad things he saw going on around him but not when he was suffering for the causes in which he believed. When good people suffer they feel that they are expiating something. They believe that God is punishing them for sins that they have committed in their past lives . . . Truth waited like a vigilant spy on Gandhiji and his inner voice always spoke to him in sure though soft tones. Gandhiji lived and worked on no man's sufferance. He suffered the world but he himself was free, entirely free. Of no one else, I say with great regard, can this be said."

On the occasion of the Birthday Celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2, 1947, Rajaji said of his Master : "We are meeting this morning in worship of the pillar of peace, for the living soul of Mahatma Gandhi is truly our pillar of peace. God sent him to us seventynine years ago to become our pillar, our only sheet-anchor, or true rudder . . . The fathers of our religion gave us compassion, pity and understanding. In the

name of religion we have abandoned compassion and are killing innocent men, women and children. All grace, all compassion, all culture seem to have fled, leaving only overwhelming fear of one another. In this great and terrible depression there is only one lamp left burning, as bright as ever--Mahatmaji as a man."

Rajaji was deeply grieved at the assassination of his master. He said: "No man ever loved his sweetheart more than Mahatma Gandhi loved us. When the bird was struck down by the cruel hunter, Valmiki was overwhelmed with pity and shouted: 'O cruel hunter, may you never find peace on earth!' That passion and the rhythm in which it found expression gave the rhythm and the melody to the *Ramayana*. May our own history be written to the tune and rhythm of the passion that was suffered by Bharata Mata when Mahatmaji fell! May the grievous tragedy that has been enacted in Delhi give us the inspiration and the rhythm for the shaping of our future history! . . . There is plenty of reason for us to grieve for ourselves. Socrates died for his work and Christ died for his faith. We did not believe we could get any other example like that. 'Conquer hate by love' said Mahatma Gandhi all these years and he was killed because he preached love. '*Ishwara* is your name. *Allah* is your name. O *Bhagavan*, grant good sense to all our people!' he prayed every day and therefor he was killed. He was killed because he preached that all faiths are one and that all names are God. Let us not lament. Let us be proud and let us deserve him. He was the friend and lover of all men and women whom he met. Indeed, he was like Krishna and as Krishna died when a hunter's arrow pierced and sucked his life away, so also has our Krishna died. Let us not grieve for him and let us make up for our own faults. It is weakness to cry over our difficulties. What we have to do is to deserve having possessed, ever for a brief period of time, the man who has passed away."

"The impact of Mahatma Gandhi" writes K.T. Narasimha-char "on Rajaji in his middle age had made him a devoted lieutenant of Gandhiji and a doughty fighter for India's freedom. Most of the other distinguished men who had responded to the call of the country admired the ideals of Gandhiji but

could not adopt them in their actual life. But there was one man who was converted by the consummate philosophy of life and action so consistently preached and practised by the Father of the Nation and made it part of his own ; there was one man who trod the Gandhian path of truth and non-violence whether he was in jail for the cause of the country's emancipation or occupying Viceroy's House ; there was one man who made it the mission of his life, even as his Master had done, to impress on his people the urgent need for following dharma with faith in God, there was one man who was like Hanuman to Mahatma Gandhi that was Rajaji."

What was the secret of Rajaji's greatness ? Why did Gandhi feel drawn to him from their first meeting and called him his conscience keeper ? On the retirement of Rajaji as Governor-General of India Jawaharlal Nehru said that there after he would feel a certain emptiness in his life because of Rajaji's bidding farewell to Viceroy's House at New Delhi. His death has left a void in the minds of all Indians. It may not be easy to fill this void. An admirer says, "The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi was not so crucial to the country's future as he had led it to the threshold of freedom. The death of Jawaharlal Nehru was not so fraught with danger to India's destiny as he had raised it high in the international sphere by his ideals. The passing away of Rajaji, however, leaves a void in the minds of millions of his countrymen for there is no one to take his place and send forth a clarion call for the purity of the administration, for urgent resurgence of *dharma*, for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth !"

Rajaji was one of the earliest to realize that Gandhi "was a man of God whose mission was the emancipation of his countrymen. He recognized the heavenly origin of the effulgence that shone from the gentle eyes of his Master, the light that was akin to the radiance of the sun and the stars, the charms of his toothless smile that had captured the hearts of the whole world, the indomitable spirit that was destined to conquer the courageous cohorts of the most intrepid empire-builders of all time !"

Gandhi was also quick to realize that "Very few of our workers have the wisdom, the integrity and the ability of [Shri Rajagopalachari. He has fully understood the meaning of our struggle, and in a moment of crisis he can be resolute and patient".

With the death of Rajaji ended an era—the Gandhian era.

The Leader in the Making

The “conscience keeper” of Gandhi was born 21 years after the birth of his master. He survived 24 years after the death of Gandhi and utilized all his time and energy in carrying out the message of Gandhi whether he was “in office” or out of it. But he did not swerve from the path of truth.

C. Rajagopalachari, called Rajaji and more briefly as C.R., was born on 10th December 1878 in Thorapalli village in Hosur taluka of Salem district to Chakravarti Iyengar and Singaramma. His father was a village Munsiff of Thorapalli, a small place situated on the bank of Dakshina Pinakini. But because of his integrity, honesty and hard work especially during a drought which had completely devastated that area, Chakravati Iyengar was promoted as Munsiff of Hosur. Rajaji had later written to a friend about his early life “ . . . I came from a very poor Brahmin family. We were fairly orthodox,

but not too orthodox. My father had a little bit of land and was a revenue collector for the village. He earned five rupees a month. I vividly remember rupees being counted and placed in heaps. In those days they were all good silver rupees—now it is only paper. My father was not educated, but he believed in educating his children. He made my elder brother sit for his matriculation examination twelve times, and my elder brother failed twelve times. Another brother of mine passed matriculation on his seventh or eighth attempt. My brothers were education flops, but I got my B.A., B.L., with flying colours. I was married when I was about so sit for my B.L. examination.”

Rajagopalachari—Rajan to his parents—went to the Government village school at Hosur. He was not considered a very diligent student, maybe because he suffered from acute myopia. He could not see the writing on the blackboard clearly. When he asked his father to get him spectacles he refused to believe that his son could not read properly from the black board. He thought that Rajan was simply vane. According to him none needed spectacles before the age of fortyfive.

Rajaji later recalled an incident of his childhood which shows that he was not a quiet type of child. Some clothes were hanging on a wire in the lawn to dry. Rajan thought that it would be wonderful to see them burning. So he set fire to a garment and invited his aunt to come and share the fun. The aunt rushed out and put out the fire.

At the age of thirteen Rajan matriculated. Just then two good things happened to him. One was that he got spectacles, his father having been convinced that he really needed them. Spectacles transformed his life. It was a “marvellous experience for him to see the stars not just as vague mists of light but with points and corners and colours and to wake up in the morning and see the shapes of the leaves and the trees.”

The second good thing was his befriending Navaratna Rama Rao. Their friendship lasted till the end of their lives. Navaratna Rama Rao was two years older and was noted for his

keen intellect and his command over the English language. Rajaji later recalled how he made friends with Navaratna Rama Rao. To quote him, "Navaratna Rama Rao and I met in 1892 when we were both in our early teens in the Central College, Bangalore. I sought him out and left a letter in his room on the top of an eating house, asking for his friendship. Eating houses were of a wretched quality in those days, and students who had no home in the city hired wretched rooms to sleep in and ate poor meals in what were called 'hotels', which were as far from the hotels we know now as a twelve anna rush-mat is from a persian carpet. My letter must have been a very boyish document. But in the romance of adolescence it was a serious adventure. I was attracted by his brains, his brightness and his lovable exterior, and by his being better read than all the rest of us in the college, and as fond of great English literature as myself. Rama Rao accepted my offer and we were friends from then until death parted us on 27th November 1960 after sixty-eight years of unbroken attachment. We read a lot together—Byron, Shakespeare, Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Thackeray, Dickens and many other classic authors' books. Mostly he read for me. He was the greater connoisseur of us two, and his taste was superb and he guided me like a mesmerist. We laughed and enjoyed humour, and talked metaphysics and educated each other continuously. Our friendship was an astonishment and mystery to our college-mates but they tolerated it, and gathered round both of us in admiration.

"My boyish instinct was right and I am thankful for it. Our mutual affection made us nobler and better, and stronger and happier than either of us would have been without it...We swore to ourselves, each in his own mind, that we should be friends for all life...Rama Rao's life and mine ran on different tracks. What of it? We were ever together though others did not see it. Whatever each of us was doing and wherever we were, we were together in spirit".

The two friends were greatly impressed by the English Professor, John Guthrie Tait. Tait, too, described these two as the best students he had and helped Rajan with a scholarship and also helped generously from his own pocket since the money sent by the Munsiff was not enough for the boarding

and lodging of Rajaji. Rajaji's respect and affection for Prof. Tait never diminished and he continued to mention his name with reverence and love till the end of his life.

In 1896 Rajan graduated from the Presidency college, Madras, in the second division. He got good marks in English but failed in Tamil, a language which he was later to handle with consummate skill. Though despite his failure in Tamil he was declared a graduate, he had to clear this subject and he sat for it again in 1897 and barely passed by getting 46 marks out of 120. He told his father, "I have at last broken loose from the Tamil devil."

Soon after his graduation he joined law and took the B.L. degree in 1899. He was married a little before he was to sit for his B.L. degree. Rajan was shown Manga—his future bride, while offering prayers in the temple. He was captivated by her beauty. The marriage ceremony lasted for five days. Manga at that time was 10 years old and Rajan 18 years. The child wife remained with her parents and Rajan returned to Madras and resumed his studies.

After getting his degree in law Rajan started practice in Salem in 1900. He had the beginner's luck and his practice began to flourish. Soon he was having a four-figure income in those days. Rajaji had a very sharp memory. Shri K.S. Ramaswami Sastri wrote later about an incident which he had seen. He had seen Rajaji filling many documents, giving their dates and details and their significance. He asked Rajaji, "You have done a difficult job admirably. But I see no notes in your hand. How do you remember all the details?" Rajaji tapped his forehead with his forefinger and said "my notes are here".

Rajaji started his practice on his own. He was a senior from the beginning. He never acted as a junior of any senior lawyer. His very first case had built up his reputation immensely. One day Rajaji learnt that the case of his first client was on board. He rushed to the court where he found an English judge presiding and a reputed lawyer opposing. Rajaji started his case with a witty remark and melted the judge and won the

case. Since then he was never short of clients even though he charged high fees.

C. Vijiaraghavachariar was the leading lawyer at Salem. He was a great patriot and infused in Rajaji the love for politics.

Two events around 1905 interested Rajaji. Rajaji was thrilled to learn about the Japanese victory over Russia and thus breaking the myth of European invincibility and Asian impotence.

In the home front Rajaji learnt about the proposed division of Bengal into two parts according to the Hindu and Muslim population in the province. The British Government pleaded administrative convenience as justification for the partition but people realized that their intention was to divide the two communities. Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh were furious and a campaign of boycott of British goods was launched. C.R. went all the way from Salem to Calcutta in 1906 to attend the Congress Session held there.

Dadabhai Naoroji was the President that year and much to the joy of Tilak and C.R., Naoroji asked for "Self-Government", or "Swaraj". This however embarrassed Sir Pherozeshah Mehta who was a leader of the Moderates. A confrontation between Moderates and Extremists became inevitable. Rajaji sided with the Extremists. He wrote in the *Hindusthan Review* of July 1907 "Extremist forms of lawful agitation are . . . necessary to command the attention of the immovable statesmen who control the destinies of this country." While not opposing reform by instalments, he added that "there is a way of throwing crumbs which . . . creates a debased canine nature of satisfaction without ambition, (and) which . . . has to be actively resisted and prevented."

C. Vijiaraghavachariar and C.R. both stood for the Extremists and under their influence Salem became an Extremist stronghold. In 1907 C.R. paid for a number of delegates to the Congress Session for the trial of strength with the Moderates. But at the session the Moderates deftly controlled the platform and did not allow the leader of the Extremists to

speak. When Tilak was being pulled down by Moderate volunteers, a stone was hurled at the President, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. There followed pandemonium. The result was that Extremists were ousted from the Congress and Moderates remained in control of it up to 1915.

Soon after the ouster of the Extremists Tilak was sentenced to six years rigorous imprisonment for writing a seditious article in *Kesari*. This dampened the spirits of the Extremists including C R. to whom freedom seemed a distant dream.

Manga was only twelve when she came to stay with Rajaji. She gave birth to a son on the day following her thirteenth birthday. In less than two years another son was born. In 1906 Rajaji was blessed with a daughter. In 1909 a third son was born and in 1912 a second daughter was born. In 1915 Manga died leaving five children. She had been ill since February 1915. C.R. "virtually set aside his practice," writes Rajmohan, Gandbi, "and nursed her day and night. Salem doctors having done all they could, he sent for a noted Bangalore physician, Dr. Nanjappa, who advised placing steamed shawls on Manga's stomach. Someone else recommended goat's milk; a goat was brought to the house. The prescriptions were unavailing.

"Nights without sleep were now frequent for C R. After one such night, he was driven by a client on a motor-cycle for a case in Namakkal. C R. returned home exhausted but with a money-filled briefcase. He opened it before Manga, hoping that the contents would cheer her. She looked at the bundles of notes and gave a sad smile that seemed to say, 'They can do nothing for me now'.

"On the afternoon of August 22 Manga asked Krishnaswami if he had eaten *dal*; it was what he liked. He said that he had, and Manga was happy. At six in the evening she asked Chama, as Samachar was called, to offer prayers at the Lakshminarayana temple in town. By the time he returned she had grown very weak. 'Look,' said C.R. 'Chama has returned with *prasadam* from the temple.' She opened her eyes, nodded, and closed her eyes again.

"To comfort Manga, who was in great pain, C.R. had taken her in his lap. After some time, his legs benumbed, he gently placed her back in bed. She said: 'I am such a burden. How long is it possible for you to hold me in your lap? There must be a limit to the endurance of the greatest love.' Ten minutes later, shortly after nine at night, she seemed to have stopped breathing. 'Manga.' C.R. cried. 'Manga,' There was no response. She was dead."

Rajaji could never forgive himself for having put her down from his lap only ten minutes before she died. But his friends were moved. T. Vijiaragvachar wrote to Krishna Iyer. "I have not come across in my life any man who nursed his wife with such care and loving attention and who tried to be such a source of courage and hope to her as C.R. was during the last months of his wife's illness."

Rajaji, after the death of his wife, looked after his children with motherly affection.

Rajaji had reached the peak of his glory in his profession in Salem district. He had specialized in criminal proceedings. He won practically all his cases. C.R. believed that a lawyer "should not put the case at once to the judge but lead the judge little by little and let him feel that he has himself discovered the truth." Rajmohan Gandhi, the grandson and biographer of Rajaji describes C.R.'s courtroom style, "His voice mellow, his thoughts clear, precise in argument, deliberate in delivery and forceful in advocacy, the turbaned, blackcoated C.R. brought life to a courtroom the moment he rose to speak.

"Where his veteran compeer Vijiaraghavachariar was exhaustive and flowery, C.R. was brief and terse. His cross examination was sober rather than intimidating, but it was deadly.

"In murder proceedings and in less serious cases he would ask only a few questions, some appearing innocent or pointless. Yet 'the picture presented with the answers would normally demolish the case of the prosecution'."

Clients felt that if C.R. took a case it would surely end

in success and the *Vakils* who lost in the lower courts also felt that if C.R. had taken an appeal nothing more was needed.

Since Rajaji used to practise in subordinate courts, he had to go from one place to another at night in carts. Once he was travelling at night. Rajaji had a licence to have a pistol and he was carrying one. He was sleeping comfortably when he woke up from his slumber hearing *param*, which in Tamil means money. C.R. thought that "he had been accosted by a highway robber. In the darkness he lifted his gun and shot at the voice. A man hurried with a lantern and C.R. saw in its light that he had shot someone posted at the toll-gate. The bullet had pierced the man's forehead and come out behind his ear. C.R. took him to a hospital in his cart, where it was discovered that mercifully the bullet had missed the skull.

'Compensating the man, C.R. went to C. Vijiaraghavachariar to tell him what had happened. There was a prosecution, the old gentleman appearing for C.R. which resulted in C.R.'s exoneration, but his licence was taken away for a while.'

During his stay at Salem Rajaji had acted as member of the Salem Municipality for a spell of three years till 1914. In 1917 he was elected Chairman of the Salem Municipal Council. It may be noted that other associates of Gandhi—Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Subhas Bose had also been elected Chairmen of the Municipal Councils of Allahabad, Ahmedabad, Patna and Calcutta respectively. But there was a difference. Whereas the rest became the city fathers after meeting Gandhi, C.R. had served as a city father before his meeting with Gandhi.

Towards the end of August 1918 Dr. P. Varadarajulu Naidu, a prominent Tamil speaker, was charged with sedition and arrested for saying some unpleasant things about the government to the mill workers in Madura. Rajaji who was at that time in Bombay assisting C.R. Das with the resolution on Montford Report took up the case of P.V. Naidu. C.R. put up a marathon defence. He pointed out to the court that the telegram from Ooty, the Presidency's summer capital, which was the authority for Naidu's arrest, did not clearly

prove the sanction of the Governor-General. But the court did not agree.

C.R. then tried to prove that Naidu's speech had not challenged India's connection with the Empire. So sedition was ruled out. Moreover C.R. pointed out that the report supplied to the court by the police was inaccurate and requested the court to cite the specific passages in Naidu's speech which were regarded as seditious. He said :

"I am not arguing for a favour but for bare justice."

The judge : "I have framed the charge ; there it is. That is all I have to say."

C.R. "That is to say, Your Honour is refusing the request." He asked the court to record his request and the refusal.

C.R. was fearless. While giving the names of the witnesses on whom he proposed to rely, he requested the judge to keep their names confidential so that the police may not harrass them. To this the judge replied : "It is always my practice to give the list (to the other side)."

C.R. : "Whatever might be the practice in this court it should not be held valid in the present case . . ."

The Judge : "I do not see any reason to deviate from the practice."

C.R. : "This is the first case of this kind. I do not think Your Honour has decided such cases."

As C.R. had anticipated Naidu was convicted because "How could they possibly expect, when the Crown was so directly . . . against the accused person, that the accused person could have a fair . . . trial at the hands of a Magistrate who . . . held the appointment at the pleasure of the Crown ?"

Naidu was however acquitted in April 1919 by the Madras High Court on a technical ground—the lack of proof of sanction of the Governor-in-Council in the Ooty telegram.

The Apostle of Truth

Few men in their lifetime have aroused such strong emotions, or influenced the course of history and the thoughts of people in so many continents as did Mahatma Gandhi. 'Generations to come,' wrote Einstein, "will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth." He was a prophet, a thinker, a social reformer, an educationist and an astute politician all rolled into one.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, in a middle class family of vaishya caste at Porbandar, which was then one of the many tiny states in Kathiawar. His grand father and his father Karamchand were the Dewan or Prime Minister of Porbandar. His father popularly known as Kaba Gandhi was a firm and upright man. Mohan feared and respected him and had complete faith in him. Putlibai, Mohandas's mother, was pious, noble and gentle lady, and she left a deep impression on her son's mind

Mohan was educated at an elementary school in Porbandar. His boyhood was uneventful. He was just above average in his studies.

From his school record none could forecast of his future greatness. But there was one incident which was significant. A British school inspector had come to examine the school. He set a spelling test. One of the words was "Kettle". Mohan was confused, was it "Cattle" or "Kettle". He made a mistake which the class teacher noticed. The latter prodded him with his foot. He wanted him to copy the correct spelling from his neighbour's slate. Mohan refused to take the hint and was later chided for his "stupidity". But he could never learn the art of copying. There are two other incidents of his childhood days which have left a deep impression on Mohan's mind. He later recalled those incidents in his *Autobiography*. He wrote, "Two other incidents belonging to the same period have always clung to my memory. As a rule I had a distaste for any reading beyond my school books. The daily lessons had to be done, because I disliked being taken to task by my teacher as much as I disliked deceiving him. Therefore, I would do the lessons, but often without my mind in them. Thus when even the lessons could not be done properly, there was of course no question of any extra reading. But somehow my eyes fell on a book purchased by my father. It was *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka* (a play about Shravana's devotion to his parents). I read it with intense interest. There came to our place about the same time showmen. One of the pictures I was shown was of Shravana carrying, by means of slings fitted for his shoulders, his blind parents on a pilgrimage. The book and the picture left an indelible impression on my mind. 'Here is an example for you to copy', I said to myself. The agonized lament of the parents over Shravana's death is still fresh in my memory. The melting tune moved me deeply, and I played it on a concertina which my father had purchased for me.

"There was a similar incident connected with another play. Just about this time, I had secured my father's permission to see a play performed by a certain dramatic company. This play—*Harishchandra*—captured my heart. I could never be tired of seeing it, But how often should I be permitted to go ?

It haunted me and I must have acted Harishchandra to myself times without number. 'Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?' was the question I asked myself day and night. To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me. I literally believed in the story of Harishchandra. The thought of it all often made me weep. My commonsense tells me today that Harishchandra could not have been historical character. Still both Harishchandra and Shravana are living realities for me, and I am sure I should be moved as before if I were to read those plays again today."

Even when he was a boy Mohan had a passion for reforming others. In his bid to reform a friend of his elder brother, Sheikh Mehtab, he cultivated his company and adopted habits for which he had to be sorry later. Sheikh Mehtab had convinced him that the British could rule India because they lived on meat which gave them the necessary strength. So Mohan, though he belonged to a vegetarian family, took to tasting meat clandestinely. But after eating meat he felt as if a live goat were belating inside him. Moreover he had to keep his eating meat a secret from his parents which he was reluctant to do. So after a few attempts he gave it up. Not only that Mohan wrote out his confessions and asked for punishment. He also pledged his word not to repeat the sin. He handed over that note to his father. His father was confined to bed at that time. He was shocked to read the contents. But he did not utter a harsh word. His eyes were filled with tears. Mohan later wrote, "Pearl drops trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. He had sat up to read it. He again lay down. I also cried. I could see my father's agony. ~~These~~ pearl drops of love cleansed my heart". Mohan's confession, coupled with a sincere resolve not to repeat the sin had melted his father's wrath.

He was married while he was still in high school, at the age of thirteen, to Kasturbai. She was also of the same age. For him it only meant a round of feasts, new clothes to wear and

a companion to play with. Later he condemned the cruel custom of child marriage.

After passing his Matriculation from the high school, Mohan joined the Samaldas College in Bhavnagar. He was not happy there because he found the studies difficult and the atmosphere uncongenial. Meanwhile his father had died in 1885. An old friend and adviser of the family, Mavji Dave, suggested that Mohan should be sent to England to study law and become a barrister which he could do in three years there. That would also brighten Mohan's chances of taking his father's place as the Prime Minister of his State. Mohan leaped at the prospect. When Mohan decided to go to England his mother was much perturbed. She had a feeling that young people get lost in England and took to wine and meat. She asked him "How can I trust you in a different land?" The mother's objection to his going abroad was overcome by the son's solemn vow not to touch wine, women and meat. The vows were never violated.

Gandhi went to Bombay to sail for England. Crossing the ocean was considered to be a taboo at that time and his caste people in Bombay threatened to excommunicate him if he insisted in going abroad. But Gandhi's mind was made up. He was formally excommunicated by his caste. Undeterred, he sailed on September 4, 1888, for Southampton. At that time he was eighteen years old and had become a father of a son a few months earlier.

At first he felt miserable. He reminiscenced, "I would continually think of my home and country...Everything was strange—the people, their ways and even their dwellings. I was a complete novice in the matter of English etiquette, and continually had to be on my guard. There was the additional inconvenience of the vegetarian vow. Even the dishes that I could eat were tasteless and insipid."

One day he happened to see a vegetarian restaurant in Farringdon Street. From this restaurant he bought a copy of Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism* and was greatly impressed by it. Till then he had been vegetarian because of the vow he had taken. From then onward he became a vegetarian by choice. He read

some more books on vegetarianism and diet and was happy to learn that even modern science confirmed the belief of his forefathers. Hence forward he made it his mission to spread vegetarianism.

In the beginning of his stay in England Gandhi passed through a phase which he has described as aping the English gentleman. He got new clothes stitched from famous and costly tailors and purchased a silk hat costing nineteen shilling. He took lessons in French and in elocution and spent three guineas to learn ball-room dancing. But he soon realized that he had come to England for studies and not for becoming a danddy. He said to himself "If my character made a gentleman of me so much the better. Otherwise I should forego the ambition."

During his stay in London he met two theosophist brothers who advised him to read Sir Edwin Arnold's translation in English verse of the Gita—*The Song Celestial*. He was profoundly impressed. "The book struck me as one of priceless worth. This opinion of the *Gita* has ever since been growing on me, with the result that I regard it today as the supreme book for the knowledge of Truth. It has afforded me invaluable help in my moments of gloom."

A Christian friend whom he had met in a vegetarian boarding house gave him a copy of the Bible, which he enjoyed reading. He also read Sir Edwin Arnold's rendering of Buddha's life—*The Light of Asia*—and the chapter on the Prophet of Islam in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*. The attitude of respect for all religions and the desire to understand the best in each one of them were thus planted in his mind early in life.

Mohandas passed his examinations and was called to the Bar on June 10, 1891. He sailed for India two days later.

On reaching Bombay he was shocked to learn that his mother had died. The news was not conveyed to him in England to spare him the shock, in a distant land.

After spending some time in Rajkot he decided to set up his practice in Bombay. He stayed in Bombay for a few months

but had only one small brief. When he rose to argue it in the court, he became nervous and he could hardly utter a word. He told the client's agent to engage another barrister. That was his first and last case as Barrister in India.

Having failed to establish himself in Bombay, Gandhi returned to Rajkot where he started again to earn a living by writing briefs for other lawyers and drafting applications and memorials. But he was by his own account a failure and was unhappy. The atmosphere of petty intrigue that was rampant in the small states of Kathiawar also added to his unhappiness. At that period came an offer from Dada Abdulla & co. to proceed to South Africa on their behalf to assist their counsel in a lawsuit. It was a godsend. Gandhi jumped at it and sailed for South Africa in April 1893.

While proceeding to South Africa Gandhi had imagined that he was escaping from an unpleasant situation in Rajkot and was going to earn some money. But fate had something else in store for him. In South Africa Gandhi who was till that time a shy timid youth of twenty-four, came into clash with forces which he could meet only by developing his hidden moral strength. It transformed his misfortunes into creative spiritual experiences.

At Durban, Gandhi was received by his client Abdulla Sheth. The first thing he realized on arrival was the oppressive atmosphere of racial snobbishness. A great number of Indian were settled in South Africa. Though most of them were indentured labourers or their descendants but some were merchants or were in professions. But all of them were looked down upon as pariahs by the white settlers and called coolies or samis. Thus an Indian doctor was a coolie doctor and an Indian barrister was a coolie barrister.

Gandhi left for Pretoria where his presence was needed in connection with a lawsuit after about a week's stay in Durban. His client purchased a first-class ticket for him. When the train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 p.m. a white passenger boarded the train. Since he did not like a "coloured" man in his compartment so a railway official ordered

Gandhi to shift to a third-class. On refusing, a constable pushed him out and his luggage was taken away by the railway authorities. It was cold winter night. Gandhi spent the whole night in the waiting-room shivering and thinking : 'Should I fight for my rights or go back to India ?' He decided that it was cowardice to run away without fulfilling his obligations.

Gandhi resumed his train journey the next evening. He faced another mishap when he travelled by a coach from Charlestown to Johannesburg. He was asked to sit with the coachman on the box outside, while the white conductor sat inside with the white passengers. Gandhi pocketed the insult for fear of missing the coach altogether. On the way the conductor wanted to come out and smoke. A piece of dirty sack-cloth was spread on the footboard and Gandhi was ordered to sit there. It was too much and Gandhi refused. The white conductor showered abuses and rained blows on him. He tried to throw Gandhi down. Gandhi did not retaliate but clung to the brass rails of the coach box. Some of the white passengers in the coach protested at this cowardly assault and asked the conductor to stop beating Gandhi. Gandhi kept his seat.

These incidents had aroused Gandhi's sense of social justice. His soul revolted against the indignities to which his countrymen were subject. Soon after reaching Pretoria, after making the necessary preliminary contacts, he called a meeting of the Indian community which comprised largely of Muslim Merchants. There he delivered his first successful public speech. He advised his countrymen to observe truthfulness even in business. He told them that their responsibility was all the greater since their country would be judged by their conduct in a foreign land. He asked them to forget all distinctions of religion and caste and to give up some of their insanitary habits. He suggested the formation of an association to look after the welfare of the Indian settlers and offered his free time and services.

The position of Indians in the Transvaal was even worse than in Natal. They had to pay a poll tax of £3. They could not own land except in a specially allotted location, a kind of ghetto. They could not vote or walk on the pavement or move out of doors after 9 p.m. without a special permit. Gandhi had received

from the State Attorney a letter authorizing him to be out of doors at all hours. Once while walking he happened to pass near President Kruger's house. The policeman on duty, without any warning, kicked him and pushed him off the pavement. An English Quaker, Mr Coats, who knew Gandhi, happened to pass by and saw the incident. He advised Gandhi to proceed against the man and offered himself as witness. But Gandhi had made it a rule not to go to court in respect of a personal grievance.

Gandhi had been busy with the lawsuit. He had not only gained a sound knowledge of legal practice but also made some discoveries. One was that litigation was ruinous to both parties in a suit. He felt that it was the duty of a good lawyer to try to settle the case as far as possible out of court. He succeeded in this particular case in persuading both Abdulla Sheth and the opposing party, Tyeb Sheth, to accept arbitration.

After completing his work in Pretoria, Gandhi returned to Durban. He was ready to sail home and a farewell dinner was given in his honour. In that farewell party someone showed him a news item in *Natal Mercury*. The Natal Government had proposed to introduce a bill to disfranchise Indians. Gandhi immediately understood the ominous implications of this bill which in his words was "the first nail into our coffin". He advised his fellow-countrymen to resist it by united action. But they expressed their helplessness without him and begged him to stay on another month. Gandhi agreed to stay for one month. But ultimately he had to stay there twenty years to achieve his mission. The farewell party turned into an action committee and Gandhi drafted a petition to the Natal Legislative Assembly. Volunteers made copies of the petition and collected signatures—all during the night. The petition received good publicity in the press the following morning. The bill was however passed. Undeterred, Gandhi drafted another petition to Lord Ripon, the Secretary of the State for Colonies. Within a month the mammoth petition with ten thousand signatures was sent to Lord Ripon. A thousand copies of the petitions were printed and distributed. Even *The Times* admitted the justice of the Indian claim, and for the first time the people

in India learnt of the plight of their compatriots in South Africa.

Gandhi had decided not to accept any remuneration for his public services. Since he had to extend his stay in South Africa and to live befitting a barrister he needed about £ 300 to meet his expenses. He therefore enrolled as an advocate of the Supreme Courts of Natal. His practice flourished and he earned enough to live as befitted a barrister.

After three years' stay in South Africa he felt that it would be a long drawn affair. He could not now desert a cause he had so warmly espoused. He decided to bring his family from India. He therefore took six months leave. In India he visited many places and met many eminent public men and editors of papers to interest them in the unfortunate condition of Indians in South Africa. He published a small pamphlet on the subject. It presented a sober and restrained statement of the Indian case. But Reuters cabled a distorted summary of this which led to considerable misunderstanding later.

Evolution of Satyagraha

During his stay in India, Gandhi met veteran leaders like Badrudin Tyabji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surrendranath Bannerjee, Tilak and noble-hearted Gokhale. He was greatly attracted to Gokhale. He addressed a large public meeting in Bombay. He was also to speak in Calcutta but before he could do so an urgent telegram from the Indian community in Natal forced him to shorten his stay. He sailed for Durban with his wife and children in November 1896.

When the ship reached Durban, it was put into five days' quarantine. The European community, misled by garbled versions of Gandhi's activities in India and by a rumour that he was bringing shipload of Indians to settle in Natal, were furious and threatened to drown all the passengers. However, the passengers, including Gandhi's family, were allowed to land unmolested. But when Gandhi came down a little and his identity

was discovered, an infuriated mob fell upon him, stoning, beating and kicking him and would probably have killed him had not a brave English lady come to his rescue.

News of this assault on Gandhi received wide publicity. When Joseph Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies came to know about this incident he cabled an order to Natal to prosecute all those who were responsible for the attempted lynching. Gandhi was asked to identify his assailants. Gandhi declined saying that they were misled and that he was sure that when they come to know the truth they would be sorry for their act.

Gandhi changed his mode of living during this second period in South Africa. Formerly, he was keen to maintain the standard of an English barrister. Now he began to reduce his wants and his expenses. He became his own washerman. The washerman's bill was heavy and besides he was unpunctual. So Gandhi bought a book on washing, studied the art and taught it to his wife. Though it added to his work but he enjoyed it. Once his collar was starched so much and ironed so little that it peeled off by bits much to the amusement of his colleagues. To quote him, "I shall never forget the first collar that I washed myself. I had used more starch than necessary, the iron had not been made hot enough, and for fear of burning the collar I had not pressed it sufficiently. The result was that, though the collar was fairly stiff, the superfluous starch continually dropped off it. I went to court with the collar on, thus inviting the ridicule of brother barristers, but even in those days I could be indifferent to ridicule.

" 'Well,' said I, 'This is my first experience at washing my own collars and hence the loose starch. But it does not trouble me, and then there is the advantage of providing you with so much fun.'

" 'The laundry bill is very heavy,' said I. 'The charge for washing a collar is almost as much as its price, and even then there is the eternal dependence on the washerman. I prefer by far to wash my things myself.'

He also became his own scavenger. The house in which Gandhi lived was built after the western model and the rooms had no outlets for dirty water. Each room had therefore chamber-pots which were cleaned by Kasturba or Gandhi. Once a Christian clerk was staying with Gandhi. Kasturba did not relish to clean the chamber-pot of a Christian. She did it grudgingly. This annoyed Gandhi. He said, "I will not stand this nonsense in my house."

The words pierced her like an arrow. She shouted back :

"Keep your house to yourself and let me go" I forgot myself, and the spring of compassion dried up in me. I caught her by the hand, dragged the helpless woman to the gate, which was just opposite the staircase, and proceeded to open it with the intention of pushing her out. The tears were running down her cheeks in torrents, and she cried : 'Have you no sense of shame? Must you so far forget yourself? Where am I to go? I have no parents or relatives here to harbour me. Being your wife, you think I must put up with your cuffs and kicks? For Heaven's sake behave yourself, and shut the gate. Let us not be found making scenes like this.'

"I put on a brave face, but was really ashamed and shut the gate. If my wife could not leave me, neither could I leave her. We have had numerous bickerings, but the end has always been peace between us. The wife, with her matchless powers of endurance, has always been the victor."

Gandhi even volunteered, despite his busy practice as a lawyer and the demands of public work, to devote two hours a day as a compounder in a charitable hospital. He took the job of teaching at home his two sons and a nephew. After reading some books on nursing and midwifery he acted as midwife when his fourth and last son was born.

In 1899 the Boer War broke out. Indians sympathies were with the Boers who were fighting for their independence. But Gandhiji advised the Indian community to support the British cause. He felt that since Indians claimed their rights as British subjects it was also their duty to defend the Empire

when it was threatened. With the help of Dr Booth Gandhi organized and trained an Indian Ambulance Corps of 1,100 volunteers and offered its services to the Government. The Corps under Gandhi's leadership rendered valuable service and was mentioned in dispatches. What pleased Gandhi most was the fact that Indians had forgotten their difference of creeds and castes and lived as brothers and faced danger together.

In 1901, when the War was over, Gandhi decided to return to India. He was having a flourishing practice at that time. But he felt he might be of greater service to his motherland. It was not an easy job to persuade his friends to let him go. They finally agreed, on condition that he would return to South Africa if they needed him. Gandhi agreed.

On the eve of his departure the Natal Indians gave him an affectionate farewell and presented him many costly presents including gold and diamond jewellery. Gandhi thought, "What right had I to accept all these gifts? Accepting them, how could I persuade myself that I was serving the community without remuneration? All the gifts, excepting a few from my clients, were purely for my service to the community, and I could make no difference between my clients and co-workers; for the clients also helped me in my public work.

"One of the gifts was a gold necklace worth fifty guineas, meant for my wife. But even that gift was given because of my public work, and so it could not be separated from the rest."

He decided that he could not keep them. He talked to his children who readily agreed with him. But it was a bit difficult to persuade Kasturba. She said, "You may not need them. Your children may not need them. Cajoled they will dance to your tune. I can understand your not permitting me to wear them. But what about my daughters-in-law? They will be sure to need them. And who knows what will happen tomorrow? I would be the last person to part with gifts so lovingly given."

And thus the torrent of argument went on, reinforced in the

end by tears. But the children were adamant. And Gandhi was unmoved.

Gandhi mildly put in : "The children have yet to get married. We do not want to see them married young. When they are grown up, they can take care of themselves. And surely we shall not have, for our sons, brides who are fond of ornaments. And if after all, we need to provide them with ornaments, I am there. You will ask me then."

"Ask you ? I know you by this time. You deprived me of my ornaments, you would not leave me in peace with them. Fancy you offering to get ornaments for the daughters-in-law ; You who are trying to make sadhus of my boys from today. No, the ornaments will not be returned. And pray what right have you to my necklace ?"

"But," Gandhi rejoined, "is the necklace given to you for your service or for my service ?"

"I agree. But service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled and moiled for you day and night. Is that no service ? You forced all and sundry on me, making me weep bitter tears, and I slaved for them."

"These were pointed thrusts, and some of them went home. But I was determined to return the ornaments. I somehow succeeded in extorting a consent from her. The gifts received in 1896 and 1901 were all returned. A trust-deed was prepared, and they were deposited with a bank, to be used for the service of the community, according to my wishes or to those of the trustees."

Reaching India Gandhi attended the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. His resolution on South Africa was passed with acclamation. But the Congress disappointed him. He felt that the Indian politicians talked too much and did too little. He condemned the importance given to the English language in their discussions.

Gandhi stayed for a few days in Calcutta as Gokhale's guest. Then he proceeded on a tour of India. He travelled third class

so as to study for himself the habits and difficulties of the poor. He felt that for the extreme discomfort of third class travel in India was both due to the indifference of authorities and the dirty habits of the passengers themselves. He advised the educated persons to travel third class to enable them to reform the people's habits and also to present their legitimate grievances.

Gandhi had hardly set up his practice in Bombay when he received a telegram from the Indian community in Natal. They wanted him again. He had promised that he would return if needed. He left his family in India and sailed again.

Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, was visiting South Africa to receive a gift of thirtyfive million pounds from South Africa. Gandhi had been called to present the Indian case before him. Joseph Chamberlain was not inclined to alienate the European community. Gandhi failed in his mission to win his sympathy. Gandhi felt that the situation in the Transvaal had become ominous for the Indians. He therefore decided to stay on in Johannesburg and enrolled as an advocate of the Supreme Court.

Though the main purpose of Gandhi's stay in South Africa was to challenge European arrogance and to resist injustice, he had no feeling of hatred for them. On the other hand he was ever ready to help them when they were in difficulty. This unique quality of Gandhi to resist wrong and at the same time love his opponent baffled his enemies and won him their admiration. At the time of Zulu rebellion Gandhi once again offered his help to the Government. He raised an Indian Ambulance Corps, which nursed the sick and dying Zulus whom the white doctors and nurses would not touch.

For some years Gandhi had been thinking of the kind of life he should lead in order to dedicate himself completely to the service of humanity. He felt that chastity or Brahmacharya was indispensable for that. Since one "could not live both after the flesh and the spirit". So soon after his return from the Zulu campaign in 1906, when Gandhi was thirty six he announced his resolution to take a vow of absolute chastity to

a select group of friends. For Gandhi the vow meant not only chastity of the body but also the purification of the mind.

This vow was taken under the influence of the *Bhagavad Gita* which Gandhi used to read daily. He also learnt from *Gita* the doctrine of "non-possession". Soon after he realized its implications he allowed his insurance policy of Rs. 10,000 to lapse. He had decided to put his faith in God alone.

Gandhi got an opportunity to read *Unto This Last* by Ruskin, in 1904. Next to *Gita* this book had influenced him most. His friend Polak had given him a copy of this book to read one day when he was travelling from Johannesburg to Durban. Before Gandhi got off the train he was determined to put Ruskin's ideals into practice. Ruskin had preached :

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

Gandhi immediately decided to buy a farm where a community life could be lived. Thus was founded the famous Phoenix settlement, on a hundred acres of land, some fourteen miles from Durban.

Soon after founding the Phoenix settlement Gandhi had to proceed to Johannesburg because of his work there. There also he founded another colony on similar ideals, at a distance of twenty-one miles from the city. He called it the Tolstoy Farm. In both these settlements the inmates did all the work themselves, from cooking to scavenging. Gandhi set an example by doing the meanest of jobs. He said there is nothing demeaning or shameful about a profession, "Have I not cleaned lavatories? There is no disgrace in doing so. On the contrary, it amounts to great service." A mother becomes worthy of being remembered every morning, if she does no more than clean the child's

filth. Why should we not regard a bhangi in the same way, Gandhi used to ask. He felt there is humility and joy in all body labour. He attached great importance to the gospel of work. Once a visitor to the ashram had asked him : "Bapu, are you not putting undue value on the gospel of work ? Are you not making a fetish of it ?"

Bapu replied :

"Not at all. I have always meant what I have said. There can never be too much emphasis placed on work. I am simply repeating the gospel taught by the *Bhagavad Gita*. The Lord says : 'If I did not remain ever at work sleeplessly, I should set a wrong example to mankind.' That is why I appealed even to the professional men to spin on the charkha. That would set an example to the rest of our countrymen."

Every inmate had to practise some handicraft. Gandhi himself learnt to make sandals. Gandhi had presented a pair of sandals to General Smuts in 1914 while leaving South Africa for India. General Smuts had said later, "I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then, even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man."

After his return from the Zulu rebellion Gandhi reached Johannesburg. There he read with deep horror the draft Ordinance. Under it every Indian, man, woman or child of eight years or upwards, entitled to reside in the Transvaal, must register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a certificate of registration. The applicants for registration must surrender old permits to the Registrar, and state in their applications their name, residence, caste, age, etc. The Registrar was to note down important marks of identification upon the applicant's person, and take his finger and thumb impressions. Every Indian who failed thus to apply for registration before a certain date was to forfeit his right of residence in the Transvaal. Failure to apply would be held to be an offence in law for which the defaulter could be fined, sent to prison or even deported at the discretion of the court. Even a person walking on public thoroughfares could be required to produce his certificate. Police officers could enter private houses in

order to inspect certificates. Gandhi called a meeting of the Indian community on 11th September 1906. It was decided, at its becoming the law, to suffer all the penalties attaching to such non-submission. But the point was how to resist-violently or non violently. From his own individual experience he had learnt that no brute force could match the spirit of man ready to defy and willing to suffer. He decided to train others to disobey without resorting to force. He got encouragement from the writings of Tolstoy and Thoreau who confirmed his ideas in their writings. Gandhi was in search of a name to give expressions to his ideals. "Civil disobedience" used by Thoreau did not convey Gandhi's own concept of *ahimsa*. Nor did the phrase "passive resistance" fully describe the concept. His cousin Maganlal Gandhi suggested *Sadagraha*, meaning holding fast to truth or firmness in a righteous cause. Gandhi liked the term but changed it to *Satyagraha* meaning adherence to truth. Thus was evolved and formulated Gandhi's most original idea in political action which changed the shape of South Africa, India and all the world. Transvaal received responsible government in 1907 and it passed the Ordinance, requiring all Indians, men and women, to register and submit to finger-prints. Gandhi advised the Indian community not to submit to this Black Act as it was generally called but court imprisonment by defying the law. In January 1908, he was arrested and sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment. He was followed by other *satyagrahis*.

Before the prison term was over General Smuts called him from jail and proposed a compromise that if the Indians *voluntarily* registered themselves he would repeal the Act. Gandhi accepted the compromise. But he had great difficulty in persuading his fellow-countrymen to accept the compromise. Some of them were not sure if Smuts would keep his word. Some accused Gandhi of having betrayed his community. One Pathan, Mir Alam, had threatened to kill him if he registered. Undaunted Gandhi went out to register. On the way he was waylaid and attacked by Mir Alam and other Pathans. He was severely injured, and became unconscious. On regaining consciousness he told that his assailants should be released.

To the great disappointment of Gandhi, Smuts broke his promise to him and refused to repeal the Black Act. Gandhi again mobilized his resources for a bitter and prolonged struggle. On August 16, 1908, at a mass meeting in Johannesburg, the Indians made a bonfire of their registration certificates and decided to defy the ban on immigration to the Transvaal. Jails began to be filled. Gandhi was arrested a second time in September 1908 and sentenced to two months' imprisonment, this time with hard labour. The struggle continued. In February 1909, he was arrested a third time, and sentenced to three months' hard labour. He enjoyed his jail term and spent his time in reading and prayers. Later he said, "The real road to ultimate happiness lies in going to jail and undergoing sufferings and privations in the interest of one's own country and religion."

In 1912, Gokhale, Gandhi's political guru, visited South Africa. Gokhale was received well by the Union Government and on the eve of his departure assured Gandhi that Union Government had promised to repeal the Black Act, to remove the racial bar from the immigration law and to abolish the £3 tax. But Gandhi had his doubts which came out to be true. The Union Government as before broke its promise. Not only that, the Government announced, on the basis of a judgement of the Supreme Court, that only Christian marriages were legal in South Africa. This made all Indian marriages in South Africa invalid and turned all Indian wives into concubines. This provoked Indian women including Kasturba to join the struggle and satyagraha assumed greater proportion. Gandhi decided that a group of women should offer satyagraha by crossing from Transvaal and another group from Natal to Transvaal since it was illegal for the Indians to cross the border from Transvaal to Natal, and *vice versa*, without a permit. Indian women from the Tolstoy Ashram crossed the border without permits. They proceeded to Newcastle and succeeded in persuading the Indian miners there . . . Gandhi himself went to Newcastle where he found an army of miners determined to continue the strike and obey him. He decided to lead this army across the border into the Transvaal in a concerted act of non-violent defiance. After giving notice to the South African Government the

march began on November 6, 1913. Gandhi was twice arrested and released on bail. On the way he again resumed the lead. Third time he was sentenced to three months imprisonment. After this his "army" was arrested *enmasse* for deportation to Natal. New volunteers from all parts of the country courted arrest. All of this, amply reported in both England and India, stirred up a storm.

The "army", returned under guard to the coal mines at Newcastle, refused, in spite of floggings and starvation, to go back to work. They were joined by others. The strike movement spread with great rapidity until fifty thousand indentured labourers (regarded as serfs in the South African system) were refusing to do any work. Thousands of free Indians, like Gandhi, were in jail.

The Viceroy of India, (Lord Hardinge) demanded a commission of inquiry, and the idea was taken up in London. Botha and Smuts were faced with new difficulties. Their immediate solution was to release Gandhi, with his friends Kallenbach and Polak, from prison (December 18, 1913). This was not at all what Gandhi wished, for he could actually do more good in jail than out. He seized his opportunity, just the same, attacked the commission of inquiry as being a "packed" body hostile to the rights of the Indians, and announced that on the first of the year (1914) he and a group of Indians would march from Durban again to court arrest.

At this point the white employees of the South African railroad system went on strike. With their messages of solidarity the European white workers felt that the Indian would help them ; but Gandhi was against it. He called off his New Year's march, explaining that satyagraha must be pure and must not aim at humiliating or embittering the enemy.

Impact of Gandhi

Rajaji had met Gandhi in 1919 but he had been getting news about him from the newspapers since 1936. To quote his biographer "From 1906 onwards newspapers had published items about a Gujarati barrister called M K Gandhi who was battling there for the rights of Indians. The account² impressed C.R. An Indian deported from South Africa visited Salem—If I remember right, it was in 1903—stayed a while in C.R's home, and told a group, Gandhi is small in size but his heart is bigger than the Shevaroy's seen from Salem.

"Then C.R. picked up, by chance, from the desk of his friend Narasimha Iyer, *Civil Disobedience* by Henry Thoreau. He found the book "very interesting". It seemed to supply the theory for what Gandhi was practising. Soon another book made an impact—Gandhi's *Indian Home Rule*, banned in South Africa and sent to C.R. by a deportee he had met in Kurnool in

1910. Reading the book with very great avidity, C.R. was struck more by Gandhi's freedom from timidity and by his refusal to recognize the English as superior than by his defence of non-violence.

"Indian Home Rule was written as a dialogue between the author, cast as 'Editor', who advocates a non-violent struggle, and a friend, described as 'Reader', who often argues as a believer in violence. It seems that the book was first reviewed in India by C.R. In his review of which only a sentence has been traced, C.R. could not resist a dig. 'Naturally,' wrote C.R. "Editor" is a better debater." The implication was that the case for violence had not been presented well enough.

Not yet quite convinced that the use of violence was wrong, C.R. even thought that Gandhi might be induced to join the revolutionaries and, with his qualities, lead them to success."

C.R. in those days was more sympathetic towards revolutionaries. He was hopeful that Gandhi might give a lead to them when he comes to India. After the arrest of Tilak and later of Khudiram Bose, who had thrown a bomb on a British Judge in Muzzafarpur, the revolutionaries, it seemed, had lost the day.

The Moderates were happy because of Minto-Morley reforms which contemplated setting up of an advisory council of notable Indians nominated by British officials. But soon the Moderates were also disappointed because Morley had declared that the new scheme was not intended to lead to a parliamentary system in India.

It may be mentioned that C R. had already warned his countrymen against Minto-Morley reforms. According to him such an assembly "will be a fresh weapon in the hands of those whom we fight ... now, though very reluctantly, call our enemies." In the *Hindustan Review* of July 1907 he called these reforms "deceptive and cleverly divisive" He urged his countrymen not to yield to "small temptations in the moment that decides.",

Though C.R. had his leanings towards revolutionaries, yet he

liked the Gandhian concept and in fact applied it in Salem before he met Gandhi. The Superintendent of Police, an Englishman had invited leading Salem citizens to a sports meet. But there were separate enclosures for the British and the Indians. C.R. was annoyed to learn it. He not only asked his friends to walk-out but also himself led a walkout of all the lawyers.

In 1912 a bomb was thrown on the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge at Chandni Chowk. It again revived people's interest, though for a very short time, in the revolutionaries. C.R. was still hopeful that Gandhi might come to India and give a lead to the revolutionaries. His belief was strengthened because of a discussion in Salem about the future of revolutionaries in which Dr. T.S.S. Rajan had asked the people to wait till Gandhi comes to India and gives them a lead. C.R. felt that Dr. Rajan had a point.

But C.R. realized in 1913 that Gandhi would be the last man to support revolutionaries. An article by Gandhi had appeared in *Modern Review* of that year giving account of Gandhi's three terms in jail. Just at that time C.R. read J.J. Doke's book on Mahatma Gandhi and he was convinced that Gandhi will never support violence. In the words of his grandson, "If C.R.'s mind was cleared of a false hope, his heart was stirred by the picture of the suffering an evidently just man was inviting on himself. It was moved afresh when he heard, in September 1913, that Gandhi's wife and young sons had been arrested for peacefully opposing a racial tax.

"He reprinted *Jail Experiences* with his own money and, indeed, his own labour. Standing in front of the treadle, treadling the machine himself, he took off the sheets for the booklet. C.R.'s introduction, in which he asked for funds, showed how he had been affected.

" 'Shall we', he wrote, 'sit happy in our homes, or shall we give only our tears? It is not given to all to exhibit the strength of M. K. Gandhi. He must be ranked with the avatars . . . '

"Let us give up perhaps a few luxuries and support them in

the ~~holy~~ battle they have resolved to fight once again. It will chasten our characters (and) bind us by a fresh and direct tie with those brave countrymen of ours . . . '

"Collecting fifteen hundred rupees, C.R. sent the money, with heartfelt reverence, to Gopalkrishna Gokhale, the Poona leader for whom Gandhi had a deep regard. Gokhale forwarded the sum to Gandhi.

Though Gandhi's struggle seemed confined, at the time, to South Africa, its reports suggested to C.R. a weapon which we can wield . . . in India."

Gandhi had succeeded in South Africa but will the new weapon of satyagraha work in India also ? C R. was among the first who was sure that it would. C.R. clearly spelt his views in a paper entitled *M.K Gandhi : His Message to India*. "Led by him, our brothers and sisters of South Africa have so acted that Indians may forget their unworthiness for a time and walk proudly in the world."

Somewhere C.R. had acquired a portrait of Gandhi and Kasturba ; it was while presenting it to the Salem Literary Society that he had read his paper.

Rajaji had so much regard for Gandhi that he told his ten year old daughter Papa not to use *avan* while speaking of Gandhi. *Avan* in Tamil is "he" without respect. "Why not?" asked Papa "Is he a Brahmin ?" He is not a Brahmin" C.R. replied "but he and his wife are like Rama and Sita".

It was in these circumstances when Gandhi finally returned to India in January 1915 at the age of forty-five with little money but with a burning desire to serve his people. Though many people had heard of his achievement in South Africa with his new weapon of satyagraha. He did not attract crowds in Bombay on his return to India. While Gandhi was still in South Africa struggling for his countrymen with his new weapon Satyagraha people in India had begun to call him Mahatma an appellation which struck to him firmly and became a part of his name. On reaching India, Gandhi met his "political guru",

Gokhale, and told him that he would spend the first year in India studying the country, with "his ears open but his mouth shut".

Gandhi treated all those who lived at Tolstoy Farm and in Phoenix Settlement as members of his family. Since many of them had come to India, Gandhi needed a home to house the large "family". The Society of the Friends of India supplied the money necessary for the purchase of land and the building of huts.

Gandhi founded an ashram, in May 1915, on the bank of the river Sabarmati, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. He called it Satyagraha Ashram but it came to be known, from the place where it was built, as Sabarmati ashram. The inmates, about twenty-five men and women, took the vows of truth, ahimsa, celibacy, non-stealing, non-possession and control of the palate, and dedicated themselves to the service of the people. Soon after opening the Ashram, Gandhi admitted an untouchable family. This was a revolutionary thing. People were furious. The ashram was run by the gifts of the rich neighbours. They stopped it. But Gandhi remained unperturbed. Just then an unknown person came and gave him a purse which contained enough money to run the ashram for a year. By that time the storm had subsided.

Gandhi delivered his first public speech in India on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Banaras Hindu University on February 4, 1916. The audience consisted of many magnates and princes and the Viceroy himself. He began by expressing his deep humiliation and shame at being compelled to address his countrymen in a language that is foreign to him. He said; "His Highness the Maharaja who presided yesterday over our deliberations spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress on it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge). Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the

poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen ; 'There is no salvation in India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.' He added, "Whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say : 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists'.

"While the Viceroy was going through the streets of Banaras" added Gandhiji, "there were detectives stationed in many places. We were horrified. We asked ourselves : 'Why this distrust ? Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live living death ?'

Many princess and high officers did not relish Gandhi's speech and left in disgust. Even the Maharaja of Baroda who was presiding over the function left. Then only Gandhi ended his speech saying, "Now that the chairman has also left, I must stop." This address of Banaras Hindu University can rightly be called the beginning of Mahatma Gandhi's public life in India. In 1917, at the request of a poor peasant Raj Kumar Shukla, Gandhi went to Champaran, in Bihar, to inquire into the grievances of the peasants of that district. The British indigo planters compelled them to grow indigo on 15 per cent of their land and part with the whole crop for rent. Thousands of peasants who had been suffering from the curse of this system rushed to narrate their woes and miseries to Gandhi. This annoyed the indigo planters and Government. The police superintendent ordered Gandhi to leave the district. Gandhi refused. This refusal was a new thing and electrified the people. He was summoned to appear in court the next day. Gandhi pleaded guilty, This embarrassed the magistrate who postponed the trial and released him. Later Gandhi was told that the case had been withdrawn and he was free to proceed with his inquiry. The Commissioner even offered to give every possible help. While conducting the inquiry Gandhi preached the principles of satyagraha. He asked the peasants to free themselves from fear. He called for volunteers to teach the illiterate and ignorant peasants in elementary hygiene. He

opened schools for their children. He told the people to be ever conscious about their duties. His ever-increasing popularity was troubling the Government. To turn him out they acceded to his request to set up a committee of inquiry. Gandhi himself was member of that Committee. Its report went in favour of the tenant farmers. And thus was the stain of indigo washed from the Champaran. The success of his first experiment in *satyagraha* in India increased Gandhi's reputation and made him a hero.

Gandhi had hardly finished his work in Champaran when he got an urgent appeal from the textile workers of Ahmedabad. Their disputes with the mill-owners was taking a serious turn. Gandhi reached Ahmedabad and satisfied himself that the workers' demands were legitimate. The mill-owners stand, not to submit the dispute to arbitration, was unreasonable. Gandhi asked the workers to go on strike, only if they took a pledge to remain non-violent. The mill-hands took this vow. But after two weeks their spirits began to dampen. Gandhi was afraid that they might break the pledge and resort to violence. At this point Mahatma Gandhi decided to fast. He declared that he would not touch food until a settlement had been reached. The fast hardly lasted for three days, when both parties decided on an arbitration and ended the strike amid general rejoicing.

Soon after this Gandhi was called by the Kaira (Kheda) district of Gujarat. In early 1918 the crops of Kaira district were washed away by rain. The farmers were left with nothing and could not pay the land revenue. They prayed for the exemption of land tax. But the Government turned a deaf ear to the request. Gandhi advised *satyagraha* but he wanted "one at least of the workers of Gujarat Sabha to accompany him and devote all his time to the campaign until it was completed." Vallabhbhai offered his services, much to Gandhi's delight. When Gandhi appealed to the people to refrain from paying land revenue, the Government became furious and enforced punitive measures for tax collection. Lands were attached, property confiscated, and cattle were auctioned. This meant too great a hardship for the famine-hit people of Kaira. The peasants had faith in their leader and stood firm. Ultimately

the Government had to yield. It agreed that the tax should be collected only from those who could pay it. This was what the Gujarat Sabha had been asking for. So the no-tax campaign was called off.

Gandhi was invited in 1917, by the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford to a War Conference convened in Delhi. The Viceroy asked him to enlist the support of Indian leaders for the recruitment campaign. Gandhi then believed that the British Empire was on the whole good, and that since India had benefited by the British connection, it was the duty of every Indian to help the Empire in the hour of its need. Gandhi supported the resolution of the War Conference. He also toured the Kheda district in the summer of 1918, to enlist men for the army. Gandhi had also hoped that his efforts—and India's would be rewarded by granting India "Home Rule".

It may be added here that where as Gandhi was, in favour of unconditional help to Britain to wage the war, C.R. wanted to tell the Government plainly that they were prepared to "help if the Congress Government would give them the preliminaries."

In pursuance of the Montague Declaration of August 20, 1917, the British Government made a gesture by removing the racial ban which excluded Indians from the King's Commission in the army. To this C.R. said that "Tilak had made it clear that it would be idle to ask the intellectual classes to join the army unless a change was made in the political situation." Subsequent events have proved that Gandhi was an idealist and Rajaji was more practical.

Marching Together

Once the War was over, the British, as was their wont, passed legislation to humble and demoralize the Indians. "Victory had brought a certain racial arrogance, accentuating the worst features of the British occupation . . . No European showed any recognition of the political and social changes of the War period. It was treated as a mere interlude, and the chief anxiety was to resuscitate the old Anglo-Indian life." As if to add fuel to the fire the Rowlatt Committee's report was published. It recommended the passing of two Bills. "One of the Bills provided for the trials without right of appeal by special courts in camera for demanding 'security' from persons 'likely to commit offences', and for the arrest on mere suspicion. The other Bill was intended to introduce permanent changes in the ordinary criminal law and to make even the possession of a seditious document punishable with two years'

imprisonment. It was a great blow to individual liberty. Naturally there was a lot of agitation over these Bills.

Rajaji was upset by the Rowlatt Committee recommendations and told the people that they would lead to the "permanent disablement of national life" He was sorry that Rowlatt Committee recommendations had not "received a tithe of the attention which the Reform scheme had been honoured with." He regretted that "not even our Bar Associations have thought it fit to examine the proposals, which threatened to set aside all legal traditions . . . not temporarily but for all times."

He told the people that that disastrous legislation was serious enough for an anxious examination of the principles and propriety of opposing it with the entire soul-force of the nation. He exhorted his people not to allow themselves to be insulted or injured but to press for their rights.

Gandhi was the only leader who was voicing the same sentiments as C.R. about the Rowlatt Committee recommendations. C.R. was immensely impressed by Gandhi's thinking who wanted covenanters ready to undergo every form of suffering to oppose those Rowlatt recommendations. C.R. felt that Gandhi should be invited to Madras. He approached Kasturiranga Iyengar, the proprietor and editor of *Hindu*, who requested Gandhi to visit Madras. Gandhi gladly accepted the invitation. As mentioned earlier, C R. and Gandhi met for the first time and were attracted towards each other

Gandhi decided to launch satyagraha against these Rowlatt Bills. He issued a call to the nation to observe 6th of April, 1919, as "*Satyagraha Day*" with prayer and fasting and taking of the pledge of civil disobedience which read : "We solemnly affirm that, in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit and we further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property."

The whole of India observed a complete hartal on 6th April 1919. C.R. was thrilled.

A week later C.R. said "The fiat of Satyagraha issued by the Mahatma had been observed by all India, by the high and the low, as if he had all the armies and the police forces . . . of India's government behind his word."

C.R. had become Gandhi's lieutenant in the South. The Police Commissioner informed the Madras Government of opening a branch of Gandhi's movement in the home of Mr C. Rajagopalachari.

There was a lot of agitation even inside the Imperial Legislature against these Bills but the Government ignored the sentiments and feelings of the people and passed the Bills. The Rowlatt Act more popularly came to be known as the "Black Act".

It was too much for people to take it lying down and there was discontentment and unrest which threatened trouble in many parts of the country especially in the Punjab. Gandhi left Bombay on 8th April and proceeded to the Punjab to help preserve peace in the Province. But he was not allowed to enter Punjab and was arrested on the way. People became furious and at many places resorted to violence. In Ahmedabad the people were so much excited that they burnt police stations, telegraph offices and other Government buildings. This riot was followed by repression and the imposition of Martial Law by the Government.

C.R. was firmly of the view that had Gandhi been allowed to enter the Punjab, Punjab violence would have been averted. Gandhi blamed both the people and the Government and felt that he had committed a "Himalayan blunder" in launching his campaign without disciplining the masses and suspended the satyagraha.

C.R. was saddened to learn about the suspension but he appealed to the people of the South to honour it.

Though ardent spirits were disappointed but C.R.'s regard for Gandhi had grown. Gandhi had written to C.R. on 3rd July, 1919, that the spiritual cause of the temporary set back was

the impurity of the satyagrahis. Gandhi added, "I have written so much in order to share with you my inmost thoughts as they came to me this morning. It is now 6.30 a.m. For on you and the few we are will be the burden."

C.R. was impressed by the integrity of the author of Satyagraha.

In the mean time Gandhiji was also released and he returned to Ahmedabad and appealed to people to remain non-violent. He felt that the people were not yet ready for civil disobedience and so he suspended it. As a penance, he fasted for three days.

The last straw which shattered Gandhiji's faith in British justice was the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh.

On April 13, 1919, a public meeting was held in the Jallianwala Bagh to protest against the unjust Rowlatt Bills passed by the Government and the arrests of local leaders Dr. Satpal and Dr. Kitchlew. When General Dyer learnt about the meeting he rushed to the spot and closed the only narrow exit, and without any warning started firing on the peaceful crowd.

Even according to a very moderate estimate of the Government 379 people were killed and 1,137 wounded.

These events coupled with the Khilafat movement hastened Gandhi to snap his ties with the British Government and to launch some sort of agitation against the Government. During the War, to appease the Muslims, the British Prime Minister, Sir Lloyd George, had promised that they would not dismember the Turkish Empire. But after the War the British Government forgot all its promises and stripped the Turkish Empire of many provinces. Referring to this betrayal on the part of the Government, Vallabhbhai said :

"Turkish Empire was divided in spite of Britain's promise. The Sultan was made a prisoner in Constantinople. Syria was absorbed by France. Smyrna, Thrace were swallowed by Greece while Mesopotamia and Palestine were taken possession of by the British. In Arabia, too, a ruler was crowned who would support the British Government,

Even the Viceroy admitted that some of the conditions of peace could not but offend the Muslim community. It has, as a matter of fact, been a heart-breaking episode for the Indian Muslims, and how can Hindus stand by unaffected when they see their fellow-countrymen, thus, in distress?"

Gandhi felt that the only effective way to deal with the situation was non-co-operation. He advised the votaries of Khilafat movement to adopt it and stressed the Hindus to support their Muslim brethren.

Gandhi found a champion in C.R. to whom Khilafat was an issue on which Hindus could make common cause with Muslims. "Is it not a beautiful thing" C.R. said to Gandhi, when the latter was planning the struggle over Khilafat, "that India could present the spectacle of one religion not merely tolerating but actually fighting for a sister religion ?

In August C.R. initiated a resolution at the Madras Provincial Conference in Trichy asking London to ensure that the regions associated with the Islamic holy places were not detached from the Khilafa's sovereignty. Some Muslim leaders arrested during the War for alleged Pro-Turkish attitudes were, C.R. reminded his audience, still in jail, including the outspoken Ali Brothers, Shaukat and Mahomed. C.R. added that many Muslim papers "had been gagged" and that "Muslim feeling in India ran high".

The Government of Madras informed Delhi in November that C.R. , "Salem Vakil who has for some time been working to promote Hindu-Muslim entente", had used persuasion with the Hindus "with the result that on the 17th (of October) most of the shops and the Bazaar were closed".

In September 1920, a special session of the Congress was held in Calcutta to pass the non-co-operation resolution. In this session Gandhi had declared that if the people non-co-operated with Government, swaraj could be won inside of a year. It had caught the imagination of the people and non-co-operation movement was launched in right earnest.

This non-co-operation resolution was latter rectified by the regular session of the Congress held at Nagpur in December, 1920.

Gandhi roused the nation with his call to non-co-operate. He started the campaign on 1st of August, 1921 by returning to the Viceroy the medals and decorations he had received from the Government for his war-services and humanitarian work. "I can retain," he wrote to the Viceroy, "neither respect nor affection for a government which has been moving from wrong to wrong to defend its immorality." He was followed by many who gave up their titles and honours. Lawyers including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Sardar Patel and C.R. left their practices, students their colleges, and schools. Many city dwellers went into the villages to spread the message of non-violent non-co-operation and to prepare the masses to defy the law. Bonfires of foreign cloth took place at various places. People took to the hum of the spinning-wheel. Women, too, joined the struggle and marched in the streets with men. Gandhi electrified the people by his speeches and writings in his weeklies, *Young India* and *Navajivan*. People were vying with each other to go to the prison. Prison had become a pilgrimage for them.

C.R. invited Gandhi to Madras to address public meetings and electrify the masses. Mahatma addressed a public meeting in Madras, where over 50,000 people listened to him with rapt attention.

In Madras Gandhi went to see C.R.'s ailing father. C.R. at that time was away. It may be mentioned that C.R.'s father was very unhappy over the decision of C.R. to give up practice and join politics. The ex-Munsiff had blamed the Mahatma Gandhi for ruining the entire family by mesmerising his son and he had declared that if he ever met Gandhi he would teach him a lesson. C.R. Narasimhan, Rajaji's youngest son describes the effect of Gandhiji's meeting with C.R.'s father.

"...It caused great sensation in the close circles of our family and friends. For my grand-father it was a rude shock. A poor Village Munsiff, he had with great difficulty brought up and educated his son and had naturally entertained great hopes of

his career. When this son gave up the profession though he had a family of five children to support, it plunged our grandfather in great sorrow. He was quite irritated with the man whom he considered to be the chief culprit of it all, namely Gandhiji.

“We, brother and sisters learnt one day that Gandhiji was going to call on our grandfather. Knowing how angry he was with Gandhiji, we were quite interested in his reactions to the impending visit of Gandhiji to him. So we asked him what he would say to Gandhiji against whom he had pent-up feelings, when the latter met him. Our grandfather said ‘Let him come, he will have the worst of it from me. Gandhiji has ruined the entire family by mesmerising my son’. Later in the evening, after our return from schools, we learnt that when Gandhiji asked grandfather whether he liked his son joining his band of non-co-operators grandfather had replied that he was very happy that his son joined Gandhiji in serving the nation. The reply to Bapu was more or less on these lines. ‘You are doing Lokaseva, and my son has joined you in this good work. I am happy about it.’ We were quite surprised at this turn of events. We asked grandfather about this. Pat came the reply, ‘He had mesmerised my son completely, and when he talked with me, he mesmerised me also and I became spellbound. He is a mischievous magician. Let him come again. I will have it out with him.’ Naturally we were very much amused by his remarks.”

In November 1921, Ali Brothers were awarded two years rigorous imprisonment and Gandhi proclaimed that he would lead mass civil disobedience in the Bardoli Taluk of Surat district in Gujarat.

The Prince of Wales visited India on November 17, 1921. India observed a complete hartal on that day.

The hartal was a great blow to the dignity of the Government but still it did not arrest Gandhi. But it banned the volunteer organization of the Congress and Khilafat in different parts of the country. The Government also banned political meetings. But people were so much infused with the spirit of non-co-operation that they openly and peacefully disobeyed the laws and courted arrests.

C.R. also declared that on December 14, 1921 he would address a public meeting and court arrest. On the appointed day he delivered a speech before a gathering of 5000 people and asked them to maintain communal unity and keep to the path of non-violence under all provocations. C.R. was arrested the next morning at 8 a.m. and at 4 p.m. the same day he admitted that he had deliberately disobeyed the order and asked for the maximum penalty. He wired to Gandhi saying that he would ask for the full sentence. Gandhi replied, "Good, hope you will get maximum penalty."

On 18th December, 1921 he wrote to Devadas, "Think of me and pray for me. . . that I may not lose faith and hope. We are in great times.

"Bapu is like a trunk shorn of all hands and feet. All his companions in all provinces including even little me have simultaneously decided to run away into prison voluntarily.

"You don't go to prison. You should remain free or outside. Harilal (the Mahatma's eldest son) has cheated you by going first."

On 21st December 1921, C.R. was awarded 3 months simple imprisonment and he wrote to Mahatma, "It is so pleasant to go to jail. I realize your anxiety and your loneliness now. I feel guilty of having deserted you. I hope you will pardon me.

"I do not know when we shall next meet or under what circumstances. But I feel I am realizing the object of my life as I am approaching the prison."

C.R. was lodged in a solitary cell in Vellore Central Jail on December 21, 1921 at about 5.45 p.m. Once inside the jail he felt that he was free and had thrown off the foreign yoke. Rajaji kept a diary in prison and later published it as *Jail Diary*. During his term C. R. suffered a lot but he bore it manfully and cheerfully. He was suffering from asthma and fell ill and was treated in a so called hospital attached to the prison. He wrote on 3rd January, 1922, "The fever left me at about 3 a.m., having been dosed with calomel and quinine. The hospital is a real addition to the terrors of prison-life. It consists of three

big rooms, and no small or special wards, with a verandah in front and another at the back. My ward contains twelve beds. The beds are full of bugs. All the windows are barred and there is only one door. The place is locked up in the evening like the rest of the jail and the sentry shouts out his "All is well" into our very ears. The front verandah is not left vacant but is used for cases needing fresh air. The back verandah is a general latrine during the night, i.e., from after lock up at 6 p.m. Incessant making of water and passing of stools by all sorts of patients. There are no commodes or decent chamber pots. Chatties without lids and general receptacles (big mud pots) are kept open the whole night. The place is a hell at night. But in the morning it is all cleared up and phenyle is liberally sprinkled and the Superintendent, who is an I.M.S. doctor, comes at about 10 a.m., when he sees nothing needing reform. Why a few proper chamber pots with lids and good commodes should not be kept in the hospital, I can't understand. They would be a non-recurring charge and, for quite moderate expense, add much to the sanitary condition."

Three days later he recorded in his diary.

"The mercury ointment has overshot the mark. It has blistered my legs terribly. The doctor's attempts at doing good by hot fomentation was excruciatingly painful. He has added to the tortures by applying carbolic acid to the ulcers. But I am not here as a patient. I am here primarily as prisoner, and it is grace on the part of the Government to take any trouble about my body. If they torture me for my ignorant over-application of mercury ointment, it is an unintended form of that violence which they would be entitled to apply directly if they liked, after passing the necessary legislation."

In Jail C. R. was reminded of his mother and his wife Manga. On 26th January, 1922 C. R. wrote, "Somehow my poor mother haunts my mind and sweetens my thoughts today. She could not imagine that her fond child, her pride and hope, would be in a common goal, imprisoned and locked-up under a 9 ft. arch. I can fancy to myself all the pleasures of explaining to her the necessity and the beauty of this retirement and this struggle. Yet another soul there was who has now passed away

from this earth, from whose mind too the idea was farthest, that I should ever be in prison, a fate from which, to her delight and pride, I had saved so many of my clients.

"These idle thoughts I occupied myself with, while getting over the hard breathing that worried me these days in the afternoons too, after my bath. Though the nights are free, I see that my constitution has become weak and has not been able to throw off the asthma the least exertion brings it on in daytime."

From Jail Rajaji wrote to Gandhi informing him that he was not allowed any newspapers; his asthma persisted; his weight had gone down from 104 lbs to 98 lbs and added, "Your eyes would flow with delight if you saw me here in my solitary cell spinning—spinning not as a task imposed by a tyrant faddist, but with pleasure. . . The spinning wheel I have is a real beauty. It is a . . . younger brother in my cell."

Gandhi reproduced this letter in the *Young India* of 9th February 1922 under the heading "From His Solitary Cell". He also added that "Rajagopalachari's loss of flesh is a . . serious matter. . . if the solitary cell is like anything I know it must be almost death to an asthmatic patient. When you are locked up in a cell you are in a box with a few holes for just enough ventilation to keep you alive.

"There is little light and no cross-ventilation. The air in a short time becomes thick and foul with your own exhalations. And you are doomed to rebreathe your own emissions. The least that humanity demands is that C. Rajagopalachari should have, if he has not, all the fresh air he can get day and night."

The effect of this remark from Mahatma had the desired effect. C.R. was transferred from the solitary cell to the general ward.

C.R. records in his diary of February 11, 1921, Gandhi's reply to his letter; "Had a letter from Gandhiji, besides one from home. The former is scrupulously non-political and dated the 3rd February from Bardoli. "I was glad and thankful to get your note. You certainly miss nothing by having newspapers. And I do envy your spinning-wheel and *Ramayana*. The latter,

I hope, is not a wretched translation of Valmiki, but the original of Kamban of which I have read so much in Pope's Tamil Handbook. You must not lose flesh. I thought, in our company I was the lowest weight. But you beat me by fully 10 lbs. now. I hope you are allowed plenty of milk. Let me prescribe for you. If you can get milk and plenty of sweet juicy fruit - oranges or grapes, you will get rid of your asthma and gain weight. Devadas is in Allahabad. Kristodas and Ramdas look after me. You are not the only one to enjoy your solitude. Sundaram is just now at the Ashram undergoing a vow of silence. He has read too much and thought so little. His silence may do him good. Yours sincerely, M.K.G."

Rajaji was sorry for the prisoners who had led lazy lives and were convicted for criminal offences. What would they do once they go out? Would they come back again? Why they escaped hard work? These were the questions which haunted his mind. He wrote in his diary on 18th February 1922.

"A young fellow here puts the convict problem in a nutshell. He awaits his release in nine days. He is a first offender. He bought a new, fine, tempting piece of cloth for Rs. 2 from a fellow who proved to be a thief. The latter was not caught, but the lad who bought the cloth was convicted. People who go out come in again at once, what shall we do for this? he asked pathetically. His own case was not a difficult one. He has father and mother and a family that work on a field taken on *varam*; so he can be absorbed in his family and be protected against a second offence or charge. But the ordinary man who has no such resources, but has to be a mere coolie and look out for himself, is in a sad plight. Hence, he comes in again and again, and puts on the old convict's black cap and makes the best of jail life as his only hope. It makes one sad to see some of the prisoners—a large number are criminally lazy and evade work, and a great deal more efficient supervision is necessary to set matters right—so hard working, so efficient and even conscientious in doing their task, under compulsion leading such well disciplined lives, without drink, and without any other sin, yet slaving for nothing. If only they led such hard lives of purity and discipline in their own homes, how happy and pros-

perous they and their families could be , As soon as one of these is released, I suppose he takes a day's holiday and drinks, and then all the discipline is lost, and he is the old man again."

A few days before his release C. R. wrote in his diary on 17th March 1922.

"Now that I am in touching distance of my discharge from jail, I may record that these three months that I have spent here have been one of the happiest periods of my life."

A little before C.R 's release, on 13th February 1922, to be precise, he had learnt that Gandhi had suspended the civil disobedience. C. R. was dismayed and hurt and thought that Mahatma had erred. But unlike Motilal Nehru and Lajpatrai he did not write an angry letter from jail.

The anti-climax came suddenly in February 1922 when Gandhi learnt about the outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura. The police had opened fire on a peaceful procession without any provocation and the mob retaliated by setting fire to the police station and burning to death 21 constables and one young son of the sub-inspector of police. Learning this Gandhiji immediately called off civil disobedience for he felt that the nation was not yet ready for non-violence non-co-operation. Many leaders including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpatrai resented the suspension of the movement when it was at the climax. They called it Gandhiji's greatest blunder and protested vehemently against "the ignominious and ill-turned retreat". Even the Government were scared of this novel type of agitation and were at a loss to know how to retaliate as is admitted publicly by the Governor of Bombay ; "Just a thin spindly shrimp of a fellow he was, but he swayed 320 million people and held them at his beck and call. He was their God, he gave us a scare His programme filled our jails. You can't go on arresting people for ever, you know, not when there are 320 millions of them, and if they had taken this next step and refused to pay taxes, God knows where we should have been ."

Gandhi's was the most colossal experiment in world's history, and it came within an inch of succeeding. But he

could not control men's passions. They became violent and he called off his programme.

But the Government utilized this opportunity to arrest him. He told the English judge at the trial: "I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person. But I hold it a virtue to be disaffected toward a government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under British rule than ever before. Holding such a belief I consider it a sin to have any affection for the system. The only course open to you, the judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country, and that my activity is, therefore, injurious to the public weal."

The Judge sentenced him to six years' simple imprisonment and expressed the hope that "If the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I."

Regarding the suspension of civil disobedience because of violence at Chauri Chaura, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has observed in his book *India Wins Freedom*. To quote him: "Gandhiji then went on to suspend the non-co-operation movement on account of the Chauri Chaura incident. This caused a severe political reaction in political circles and demoralized the country. The Government took full advantage of the situation and arrested Gandhiji. He was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and the non-co-operation movement slowly petered out."

"Mr C.R. Das used to discuss the situation with me almost every day. He was convinced that Gandhiji had erred grievously in calling off the movement. This had so demoralized political workers that it would take many years before public enthusiasm could again be roused. Besides, Mr Das held that Gandhiji's direct methods had failed. He therefore thought that we must adopt other ways to restore public morale. He was not in favour

of waiting and watching till the situation again improved. He believed in an alternative programme and said that in the existing situation, direct action must be given up and the political fight taken inside the legislatures. Under Gandhiji's influence, the Congress had boycotted the elections held in 1921. Mr Das declared that Congress must prepare to capture the legislatures in 1924 and use them to further our political ends. Mr Das was hopeful that all active leaders of the Congress would agree with his analysis and remedy. I thought he was over-optimistic but I agreed with him that when he was released he should consult friends and prepare a new programme for the country.

"Mr. Das came out on the eve of the Gaya Congress. The Reception Committee elected him the President and Mr Das felt that he could carry the country with his programme. He was encouraged all the more when he found that Hakim Ajmal Khan, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Sardar Vithalbhai Patel agreed with his approach. In his presidential address, Mr Das proposed that the Congress should accept the Council entry programme and carry the political struggle into the legislatures. Gandhiji was at that time in jail. A section of the Congress led by Shri Rajagopalachari opposed Mr Das. They felt that if direct action was given up and Mr Das's programme accepted, the Government would interpret it as a repudiation of Gandhiji's leadership.

"I do not think that Shri Rajagopalachari was right in his interpretation. Mr Das was not seeking a compromise with the Government but only extending the political struggle to another field. He explained this at length but he did not succeed in converting the rank and file of the Congress. Shri Rajagopalachari, Dr Rajendra Prasad and others opposed him and defeated his proposal. The Gaya Congress split and Mr Das tendered his resignation. All the energy of Congressmen was now spent in an internecine struggle between the two groups called the no-changers and the pro-changers.

"After another six months, I also came out of jail. I found that the Congress was facing a serious crisis. Instead of the political struggle against the British, the energy of all Congressmen was being dissipated in internecine warfare. Mr Das, Pandit Motilal and Hakim Ajmal Khan were leading the camp of pro-

changers. Rajaji, Sardar Patel and Dr Rajendra Prasad were the spokesmen for the no-changers. Both groups tried to win me but I refused to identify myself with either camp. I saw that these internal dissensions were dangerous and unless checked in time might break up the Congress. I therefore decided to remain outside both camps and tried to redirect all our attention to the political struggle. I am happy to say that I was successful in my efforts. A special session of the Congress was held at Delhi and I was elected President with the approval of both the groups.

“In my presidential address, I stressed the fact that our real object was the liberation of the country. Since 1919, we had been following a programme of direct action and this had yielded considerable results. If now some among us felt that we must carry the fight into the legislatures’ there was no reason why we should stick rigidly to our earlier decision. So long as the objective was the same, each group should be free to follow the programme which it considered best.

“The decision of the Delhi Congress was as I had anticipated. It was agreed that pro-changers and no changers should be free to pursue their own programmes. Dr Rajendra Prasad, Shri Rajagopalachari and their associates took up the constructive programme. Mr C.R. Das, Pandit Motilal and Hakim Ajmal Khan founded the Swaraj Party and decided to contest the elections. Their move created great enthusiasm throughout the country. In the central as well as in all the provincial Assemblies, the Swaraj Party won a very large following.

“One of the major objections of the no-changers had been that Gandhiji’s leadership would be weakened by the Council-entry programme. Events proved that they were wrong. In the Central Legislature, the Swaraj Party proposed a resolution urging the immediate release of Mahatma Gandhi. Before the resolution could be passed Gandhiji was released.”

Manufacturing Disobedience

A week before C.R. was released he learnt in jail that Gandhi had been arrested. He wrote in his diary on 12th March, "We had news—at noon today that Gandhiji was arrested. The news was received fairly calmly and we resolved on a 36 hours fast and prayers." The following day he added, "what is the country going to do after Gandhiji's arrest ? . . . What can I do outside, with every fellow worker and Mahatmaji in prison. I wish my term had been longer".

C.R. had learnt in prison about Gandhiji's imprisonment but he learnt about his period of imprisonment only on his release day and he wrote in his diary: 'Learnt that Pilate gave six years S.I. to Christ. God gave us a man to lead us, but the Government claim the right to take him away. . . Their will be done'.

Ten days after his release C.R. met Gandhi in jail. C.R. was sorry to learn that Gandhi was not treated well in jail. He

was given a flimsy blanket for a mattress and was locked inside his solitary cell at night. Gandhi, however, told C.R. not to divulge these facts to the Press. C.R. told him to trust his judgement in that matter. C.R. wrote in the *Young India* on 6th April, 1922 that the Government was unaware of their "privilege of being custodians of a man greater than the Kaiser, greater than Napoleon . . . greater than the biggest prisoner of war". The Press took up the issue and the Government realized their mistake and began to give better treatment to Gandhi. Thus C.R. had done for Gandhi what Gandhi had done for him in Vellore.

Before his arrest Gandhi had advised that in his absence people should not rush to civil disobedience but take up constructive work, i.e. spinning, Hindu Muslim unity, removal of drink and of untouchability. He advised his countrymen to concentrate all their energies on the "tasteless but health giving economic and social reform."

C.R. was the guiding force at the A.I.C.C. session which met in June 1922 at Lucknow. There was a lot of propaganda by the Pro-changers in support of council-entry. C.R. was against it and pointed out its dangers. C.R. saved the situation by suggesting that those who do not believe in non-co-operation should form themselves into a second party within the Congress and work along the lines of their own faith. The Pro-changers could not capture the Congress. They again tried strength in the Gaya Session of the Congress held in December 1922. C.R. again emerged the hero. C.R. because of his faith in Gandhiji's principles and policies was satirised, the "Deputy Mahatma".

Rajaji now concentrated all his energies on the constructive work. Alongwith Rajendra Prasad he toured central provinces, Bengal, Punjab, Sind to preach gospel of khadi, removal of drink, of untouchability and need for Hindu-Muslim unity.

C.R. also organized a successful Flag Satyagraha in Nagpur in 1923. The Government had banned a street procession with a flag in Nagpur. C.R. supplied a stream of satyagrahis. He appealed to the people through *Young India* and through his forceful speeches and enlisted a huge army of satyagrahis largely drawn from South. The satyagrahis would take out procession

with flags in that street and court arrest. The prisons became full. Ultimately the Government had to yield. It was a big victory for the satyagrahis.

In January 1924 Gandhi fell seriously ill with acute appendicitis, and was released on health grounds after a successful operation in 1924.

During his period of imprisonment people had changed a good deal. There was no unity between the Hindus and Muslims. The Khilafat issue had become a dead issue. The Muslims no longer needed Hindu support. The two communities had become hostile. Communal riots took place in several places. To curb this wave of frustration, Gandhi undertook a fast of twenty-one days to atone once again for the sins of his people. "It seems as if God has been dethroned," he said, announcing the fast. "Let us reinstate him in our hearts." The fast provoked considerable heart-searching. Before it was over, many men of both communities pledged to remain united.

After his release Gandhi had noticed a rift in the Congress ranks on the question of Council-entry. The question was should Congressmen join the Legislative Councils or not. C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru supported council-entry whereas Gandhi did not want to create a split in the Congress. He preferred to retire from the Congress scene, to be precise he retired from the political controversies of the day and devoted his time and energy for the next five years to the constructive work namely, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, equality of women, popularization of hand-spinning and the reconstruction of village economy in general. "I am not interested," he said, "in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke, whatsoever."

During these five years Gandhi and C.R. toured extensively. Their themes were propagation of khadi, removal of untouchability and the promotion of communal harmony. Gandhi laid great emphasis on spinning. When Tagore "expressed the fear that the emphasis on the spinning-wheel would bring about a 'death like sameness in the country' Gandhi replied:

"I did not want the poet to forsake his music, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief, and the doctor his lancet. They are to spin only thirty minutes every day as a sacrifice. I have indeed asked the famishing man or women, who is idle for work whatsoever, to spin for a living and the half-starved farmer to spin during his leisure to supplement his resources."

Rajaji also became a staunch supporter of khadi. In a speech at Ahmedabad in 1925 he told the audience the need for khadi. "Khadi work," he told them, "is the only true political programme before the country." He added:

"You are living in a great city. You do not really know the amount of poverty that has overtaken the country called India. As a matter of fact in India there are thousands and thousands of villages where men do not get more than two and a half rupees a month. There is no use shedding tears for them if we won't wear a few yards of khadi which they have manufactured and want us to buy, so that they might get a meal. If our hearts were not made of stone, we would all be wearing khadi. Khadi means employment for the poor and freedom for India. Britain holds India because it is a fine market for Lancashire".

Earlier in February 1925 Rajaji had set up an Ashram at Tiruchengode to boost up khadi work. The land for it was gifted by Ratnasabhpathi Gaunder—the local *mitiadar*—who was a great admirer of C.R. This Ashram had a school which taught spinning and weaving. The Ashram started with a thatched hut but developed by and by. Four Harijans were the first to be admitted. Because of this Ashram Tamil Nadu became the centre of khadi movement. An Ashramite paints a picture of Rajaji's life in the Ashram. To quote him: "Rajaji lived with his youngest son and his daughter. We were a group of about ten of whom one was specially taken from the untouchables. We were living as a joint family with a common mess. This created a furore and the neighbouring Goundars tried to boycott the Ashram. Rajaji was altogether undisturbed. Ratnasabhpathi Goundar continued to help us, and in a short time, the people came to be reconciled especially as they needed the guidance and help of Rajaji in many matters. They came to him

for writing their letters, and settling their disputes with neighbours. Once there was a murder in the neighbourhood, and a large number of villagers were taken to the Police Station, and released after each of them paid 100 or 200 Rupees to the Police Officers. They all came to Rajaji and he collected written statements from them giving precise details of the amounts taken. Then he wrote to the Deputy Superintendent of Police informing him of the statements collected, and gave him the choice either that the guilty officers should immediately refund the amount and apologise for their conduct, or further steps would be taken. This had immediate effect. The amounts were refunded, and officers apologised and promised not to harass the villagers. This had such a tremendous moral effect that the Ashram became a beloved institution in all the villages around."

Rajaji was against drinking. In fact the Ashram used to conduct propaganda for prohibition. Masti Venkatesa Iyengar quotes an incident which shows how C.R. reformed the life of a drunkard.

"A Harijan woman one day complained to Rajaji that her husband drank and quarrelled. When she objected that, he beat her and her children. Rajaji got the man and asked why he did so. The man denied the accusation. He was a cobbler. Rajaji put a pair of chappals in his hands and said 'swear by the chappals that the charge is not true. The man dare not do it. What he held in his hand was the thing through which he was earning his living. He fell on Rajaji's feet and admitted the charge and promised to drink no more. It is recorded that he did not drink any more. Rajaji gave him work and later put him incharge of the footwear unit of the Ashram."

Just as Gandhi was spreading the gospel of khadi from Sabarmati Ashram, C.R. was preaching it from his Tiruchengode Ashram.

Thus while the spinning-wheel had an economic significance for the farmer, the labourer, or the helpless widow in the village, to the townsman its appeal was based on moral or (as Gandhi would have put it) on spiritual grounds.

Since the Congress was divided the time was not ripe for a mass scale satyagraha. In September, 1924 Gandhi wrote "The mutual bickerings have assumed such large proportions that we must give up for the time being any idea of large-scale satyagraha. Our failure to do so will be our undoing. Not a single thing is correctly understood. Every thing misrepresented; distrust all round. It is up to us under the present circumstances to adhere to our principles and be the silent witnesses of the actions of others."

With the passage of time the various groups gathered their full support to Gandhi.

In December 1929, Gandhi moved the Resolution in the Congress session declaring complete independence as goal of Congress policy. He fixed 26th January 1930 for the celebration of "Independence Day". On that day, in the towns and villages of India, hundreds of thousands of people took a pledge that "it was a crime against man and God to submit to British rule" and undertook to join a campaign of civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes if the Congress launched it. Independence Day revealed the latent enthusiasm in the country; Gandhi felt the country was ripe for a mass movement.

Gandhi announced that he would himself perform the first act of civil disobedience by leading a group of satyagrahis to the sea shore for the breach of Salt Laws. He communicated his plans to the Viceroy in a letter. Gandhi sent a copy of this letter to Rajaji. Rajaji wrote to him : ". . . . they cannot let the conflagration grow on the ground that much salt cannot be made by you. It is not salt but disobedience that you are manufacturing."

Gandhi commenced his Satyagraha on March 12, 1930 from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi along with seventy-eight members of his ashram, both men and women. His historic march continued for 24 days covering 241 miles on foot. The villagers flock from miles for his darshan and to listen to his speech. Early in the morning of April 6, after prayers, he went to the beach and broke the salt law by picking up a little lump of salt

left by the waves. After that hundreds of thousands of people all over the country broke the salt law. The Government was soon alarmed and resorted to oppressive measures. They arrested Gandhiji on 4th May. But then people vied with each other in going to jail. Jails were filled to the utmost capacity. To check it the Government tried to demoralize the people by arresting other leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Motilal Nehru. But people were not demoralized and within a few weeks about a hundred thousand men and women were in jail, throwing the mighty machinery of the British Government out of gear.

Twenty five days after Gandhi broke the Salt Laws at Dandi, C. R. followed in the footsteps of his Master. He led a 150 mile march of 98 satyagrahis from Trichy to Vedaranyam on April 13, 1930 to break the Salt Laws. The Vedaranyam March of Rajaji equals the famous Dandi March of Gandhi. Rajaji's grandson Rajmohan Gandhi paints a pen picture of Rajaji leading the Vedaranyam March. To quote him: "Precisely at five a figure of medium height with a bald oval head, a staff in his right hand and a haversack across his shoulder emerged from the house and took a position on the road. Soon he was joined, in rows of two, by 96 others, most of them in caps and holding satchels. As they stood in silent prayer, two girls, daughters of C. R. and Dr. Rajan, pressed kumkum red powder of blessing and luck, on each forehead. Hundreds had assembled at the unusual hour to witness a going out to war. When the marchers took their first deliberate steps there was a complete hush. Tears trickled down the faces of some onlookers. After a few seconds the notes of a song could be heard. *Kathiyinri Rathaminri*, the marchers were singing ("Sans sword, sans blood"). The verse had been composed for the occasion by the poet Ramalingam Pillai.

"C.R. had not walked long when he was shown the morning's paper carrying Thorne's order against "harbouring". Without pausing or slowing down, C. R. dictated, to accompanying press reporters, a fresh answer. He knew, he said, his people and their tradition of hospitality better than a British officer did. The order, he predicted, would enlarge the public's welcome. With a twinkle he added, "Thorns and thistles cannot stem this tide of freedom."

G. Ramachandran who participated in the march gives the following account of that March. "At every meeting on the route, he spoke of the gift of salt from the hands of Nature and why should people be prevented from receiving this gift free of taxes. He spoke of how the blue-waters of the sea running into creeks and openings along the coast spread and dried into crusts of silver salt. Let the people go and gather the salt and use it fearlessly. Rajaji's trust in the people was more than justified by events. They rose everywhere to receive the satyagrahis and shower hospitality on them. In fact Rajaji was compelled to issue a warning that hospitality must be drastically reduced, and satyagrahis should not be pampered. At Vedaranyam itself there was a mighty crowd, and scores of garlands and addresses awaiting him. Rajaji looking tired but smiling rose to speak and received thundering applause. But evidently he did not want all this noise. He pleaded for silence and in order to save time he said he would take the addresses as read, and the garlands as put round his neck. The people certainly looked disappointed, but as Rajaji began speaking their faces brightened and they listened in rapt attention. It was a brilliant speech without rhetoric. He said he would himself break the Salt Law the next day and then all the people must break the Salt Law wherever possible. He asked the people not to be afraid. India was going to be free, and the police who would now arrest the satyagrahis would then protect them as their servants. This was a simple but tremendous message of hope for the people.

"The message of freedom spread from village to village and Rajaji's interpretation of that freedom reached the minds of hundreds of thousands of men and women in Tamil Nad. Rajaji emerged from the Vedaranyam satyagraha as a national hero taking his place along with Sardar Patel with this deference that while the redoubtable Sardar was a man of action, Rajaji was both a man of the highest intellect, and of action at the same time. He drew from the people not only cooperation in action but allegiance to ideas."

The marchers reached Vadaranyam on 28th April. C. R. declared that he would break the Salt Laws on April 30. On

that day C. R. along with his 16 fellow marchers broke the Salt Law.

As expected Rajaji was arrested and sentenced to six months R.I. plus a fine of Rs. 200/— or another three months. Rajaji preferred additional three months. On the way C.R. wrote to his 17 year old daughter, "My dear child, I am getting nine months leave . . . Pray to God for our battle's success."

Rajaji later recorded about his meeting with collector Thorne "After my arrest and conviction at Vedaranyam, Mr. Thorne joined me in the Railway compartment at which I was taken to the Trichinopoly jail. Throughout the march I was engaged in perpetual defence against the siege he had laid against us: but we met face to face only on 30th April 1930. He came in offering his hand and asking for permission in gallant style. 'Are you Mr. Thorne?' I exclaimed. 'I had thought that you were a much more terrible person'. He was small and unimpressive, and one might well have taken him for the 'man of peace' he claimed to be in the course of the chat that followed. But it was this small man that armed the police throughout India with the lathi and the ordinance. Before then Government had been hypnotised into non-violence by our own non-violence. It was Mr. Thorne to whom the credit must be given of waking the Government upto its legitimate right of using violence against non-violence. 'You wanted to organize a peoples' boycott against the peoples' will. It was bold, but you forgot that we are in our own country,' I said. Mr. Thorne received my remark with a smile and replied, 'Yes, we have each tried to do our best and our worst'. He got coffee and other refreshments for me and I saw how this hospitality and good fellowship delighted all the constables, station staff and the crowds that gathered at the small station platform that we passed. They seemed to say in their minds. 'This is better than a fight.' India's genius is for peace. It loaths conflicts. But alas, conflict is necessary, and the best we can do is to make it non-violent at least on our part."

Gandhi along with C. R. and some other Congress leaders was unconditionally released on January 25, on the eve of "Independence Day" to enable the Congress to participate in the Second Round Table Conference to be held in London. The

outcome of these talks was the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which was signed on 5th March. According to this pact, all political prisoners were released. The Congress agreed to take part in Second Round Table Conference and called off the Civil Disobedience Movement. India did not gain anything from this Pact, nor was there hope of her getting anything by participating in the Round Table Conference. Still Gandhiji accepted it. Maybe, he wanted some breathing time. People had suffered a lot. 90,000 had gone to jails in response to the Salt Satyagraha. Yet there was no tangible result. People's interest in the Congress was on the wane and Gandhi had noticed it. Whatever might be Gandhi's reason for agreeing to the Pact the result was discontent among the people and they openly expressed the resentment.

Before sailing for London Gandhi wrote to C. R. on 28th August, 1931; "What shall I write to you ? Do you know that not a day has passed but I have thought of you and also felt the need of your presence ? But I was not to have it and as ill luck will have it, I cannot have even a few words with you before sailing. There are two men whom I would like by my side in London, you and Jawaharlal. But I feel that even if both of you were available I must not have you by me. Somehow or other I do feel that you will both be helping me like the others by being here. Only your presence with me will have lightened my burden. But I must bear the cross alone and to the fullest extent. When I think of my self with all my limitations and ignorance I sink in utter despair but I rise out of it immediately, as I think and feel that it is God within who is moving me and using me as His instrument. He will give me the right word at the right moment. That does not mean that I shall make no mistakes. But I have come to believe that God as it were purposely makes us commit mistakes if only to humble us. I know that this is a dangerous belief which can be utilized to justify any error. But I have no doubt about its correctness in respect of all unconscious errors. But this is not a letter to air my philosophy. This is written to ask you to give me through weekly letters, sent even by air mail, what I cannot get through your presence. I would like you also to write for *Young India* every week. I do not think there is any legal necessity for advertising a new editor

during my temporary absence. If there is a legal necessity I could like you to wear the editorial mantle.

"I would like you to prepare a rejoinder to the Madras Government's reply to the Madras charge-sheet and bring the latter to date and send your rejoinder to the Sardar.

"By way of preliminary send me by air mail your detailed reflection on what you expect me to do in London. Copies of whatever you send by air mail should be sent through the usual weekly service."

As anticipated, nothing came out of the Round Table Conference. Gandhiji returned to India on 28th December 1931 and found that repressive measure had been started in his absence. The new Viceroy Lord Willingdon was hostile to Congress and had contempt for Gandhi. He had declared his intention to "destroy Congress in six weeks and restore peace and order in the country." He had said about Gandhi, "Irwin was a simple man who was deluded by this intriguing Bania. I would not pay the slightest heed to his views." Both Gandhi and Patel were arrested in Bombay on 4th January 1932 and both were lodged together in Yeravda Jail.

On August 17, 1932, the Communal Award was published. It provided for separate electorates not only for the Muslims but for the "untouchables" as well, thereby causing a permanent vivisection of the Hindu community. Gandhi therefore wrote to Ramsay Mac Donald announcing his resolve to undertake "a fast unto death". In the early hours of the morning of September 20, he wrote a letter to Tagore. "This is early morning, 3 o' clock of Tuesday, I enter the fiery gates at noon. If you can bless the effort, I want it. You have been a true friend because you have been a candid friend." Even as he handed the letter to be posted came a telegram from Tagore. "It is worth sacrificing the precious life for the sake of India's unity and her social integrity. . .Ours sorrowing hearts will follow your sublime penance with reverence and love."

Tagore's words echoed the sentiment of the whole nation. The heart of every Hindu community was roused as never before.

Each held himself responsible for the curse of untouchability. They feared if Gandhi died in this penance the sin would rest on all. The Hindu Leaders' Conference met at Bombay, who in consultation with the leaders of the "untouchables", whom Gandhi called Harijans (children of God), signed a pact popularly known as Poona Pact—which was acceptable to Gandhi.

Rajaji played a leading part in shaping the Poona Pact. At the last stage B.R. Ambedkar had posed some fresh difficulty regarding the pact. C.R. agreed to a modification on his own responsibility and when Ambedkar concurred, went to Gandhi, made the proposal to him, and sought his consent. Gandhi asked him to repeat the proposal. Rajaji did so and Gandhi thought it excellent and agreed. This remission saved Gandhi for the country.

On the following day, when Gandhi's condition was causing grave anxiety to the doctors, came the news that the British Government had accepted the Poona Pact. In the afternoon, Gandhi broke the fast. This fast is said to have broken the backbone of untouchability in India. He started a Weekly—*Harijan*—which published graphic pen-pictures of the denizens of hell, the miserable habitations in which these outcasts live. Their disabilities were listed at length. In some parts of the country they were denied access to village wells, watertaps, schools and post offices, and prevented from using umbrellas and wearing sandals. The menfolk could not wear a *dhoti* below their knee, and the womenfolk were forbidden to put on clean clothes or jewellery. Because of Gandhi's drive against untouchability some orthodox temples had been thrown open to the Harijans but not all. Gandhi wanted all the temples to be open to Harijans. He was thinking how to gain it. He was perturbed. Gandhi's anguish was brought to an end by a call from within to embark on a twenty-one day fast from May 8, 1933: "I had gone to sleep the night before without the slightest idea of having to declare a fast next morning. At about twelve o' clock in the night something woke me up suddenly, and then some voice—within or without—I cannot say, whispers, 'Thou must go on a fast.' 'How many days?' I ask. The voice again says, 'Twenty one days.' 'When does it begin?' I ask. It says, 'You begin tomorrow.' I went off to sleep after making the decision."

On May 8, 1933 the first day of the fast, he was released.

Gandhi was again arrested on August 1, and sent back to Yeravda prison. He was released three days later but confined within the limits of Poona city. He defied the order, was rearrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Back in gaol, he commenced a fast on August 16, to protest against the denial of the facilities for the promotion of the campaign against untouchability which he had been receiving during his earlier incarceration. His condition deteriorated rapidly and he was released.

Rajaji was against this fast. Gandhi later recorded. "Rajaji, whom you know, at any rate whose name you have heard, is I think unsurpassed in godliness or God-mindedness. Now when I took the 21 days' purificatory fast in the Yeravda Jail in 1933 and proclaimed that it was in answer to a call from God, Rajagopalachari came all the way from Madras to dissuade me. He felt sure that I was deluding myself and that I should probably die and, if I did not, I should certainly be demented. Well, you see that I am still alive and of a sound mind. And yet perhaps Rajaji still thinks I was deluded and it was by an accident that I was saved, and I continue to think that I fasted in answer to the still small voice within".

Gandhi devoted his energies for the next six years to the uplift of the Harijans and for village uplift. In September 1933 he handed over the Sabarmati Ashram to a Harijan Society and shifted his residence to another ashram at Wardha. "India lives in her villages, not in her cities," he said. When I succeed in ridding the villages of their poverty, I have won swaraj." "No sophistry, no jugglery in figures," he had written 1922, "can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history."

In the meanwhile the council-entry movement was gaining strength. A conference was held at Delhi by the Congress leaders

who favoured Council—entry under the chairmanship of Dr. Ansari. Gandhiji did not want to stand in their way and issued a statement on 7th April 1934 suspending Civil Disobedience Movement. Once the Movement was suspended the Government gave up repressive measures and released all political prisoners and also lifted the ban on the Congress.

So it was decided to hold the Congress Session in October in Bombay. This Session is important in many ways, First, it was held after 3 years. Secondly, the Congress had decided to contest for the entry into legislatures. Thirdly, Gandhiji announced his decision to resign from the Congress. Gandhiji's reason for leaving the Congress in his own words was, "I see that the educated and the intelligent sections of the Congressmen no longer have faith in my programme of work. In particular they have no faith in spinningwheel and khaddar. Out of personal consideration for me or because they are afraid that if they opposed me openly they could not hope for success, they are refraining from open opposition and support my programme although they are genuinely convinced of its merit. I am thus a burden to the Congress. Because of me, the bulk of the Congressmen are unable to think independently or behave independently. I think, therefore, it would be appropriate and in the interest of the Congress, that I should withdraw myself from the Congress." This decision of Gandhiji came as a shock to all the Congress workers. C. Rajagopalachari, Abdul Kalam Azad and others appealed to Gandhiji to reconsider his decision. They said that the elections were at hand and his leaving at that moment could prejudice the public and affect adversely the success of the Congress in the elections.

Once Gandhiji had left Congress, he concentrated on removal of untouchability and collecting funds for Harijan work.

Gandhiji, though outside the Congress, continued to guide it and at his instance the next Session of the Congress was held in December 1936 in a village at Faizpur to attract villagers. There was some difficulty in regard to the choice of President. Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal were the two choices. As Gandhi was for Nehru; Patel decided to withdraw in favour of Nehru.

“Arjuna Resumes the Bow”

Once the Congress had decided to take part in the State elections in consequence of the new Government of India Act, Rajaji—a one-time staunch “no-changer” lent all his energies to ensuring Congress Victory. In Madras, the Congress secured a clear majority. The Governor invited Rajaji to form a Ministry. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then President of the Congress was strongly against the acceptance of office because of the special powers vested in the Governors by the Government of India Act. Rajaji used his influence and convinced Gandhi of the wisdom of accepting office. Gandhi agreed, provided the Governors would commit not to use their special powers to the prejudice of the new Governments. These powers, it may be mentioned, related to law and order of the province concerned, the rights of the minorities and the legitimate interests of the services. Rajaji met the Governor of Madras, Lord Erskine. The Governor refused to give any such undertaking. The talks broke down on the 27th.

Rajaji issued a statement ; "I regret to say that beyond the offer of goodwill and co-operation. His Excellency, has refused to assist me with any assurance of non-interference, formal or informal. I had therefore no option but to express my inability to take up office under these conditions and respectfully to decline the invitation to form a ministry".

Rajaji and Gandhi carried on their campaign against the special powers of the Governors and ultimately the Government had to yield. The Viceroy said in a public statement : "There is no vestige of foundation for the assertion which I have seen advanced that the Governor is entitled under the Act at his pleasure to intervene at random in the administration of the province. These special responsibilities are, as I have said, restricted in scope to the narrowest limits possible. Even so, limited as they are, a Governor will, at all times be concerned to carry his ministers with him, while in other respects, in the field of their ministerial responsibilities, it is mandatory on a Governor to be guided by the advice of his ministers, even though for whatever reason, he may not himself be wholly satisfied that that advice is in the circumstances necessarily and decisively the right advice. The extent to which, in practice, given good will on both sides and a desire to operate the new constitution for the benefit of the province as a whole, difficulty may be anticipated from the existence of these special responsibilities cannot be better exemplified than by the history of every province in India during the past three months". Lord Erskine made a similar statement at Coonoor. He said : "Under the normal working of the constitution, not only does the initiative for policy rightly belong to the ministers, but also the reserved powers of the Governor will be most unlikely to come into operation at all, so long as the ministry are solely concerned with the good Government of the province and the true happiness of all its people".

On the basis of these assurances the Congress agreed to form governments in the provinces where it had a majority in the legislatures.

Rajaji formed a ministry in Madras and became its Premier. People were very jubilant on Rajaji's becoming the Premier. On

that occasion an article entitled "Arjuna Resumes the Bow" appeared in a newspaper.

During his regime as Premier of Madras Rajaji did commendable work in the fields of prohibition, untouchability and in scaling down rural indebtedness.

Gandhi and Rajaji were champions of prohibition. The Congress had adopted the policy of prohibition and written it into the Congress Constitution. To Gandhi "Prohibition was symbolic of the nation's mood of harnessing all its energies to the bettering of the life of the Indian people, a determination to face the problems and overcome them instead of running away from them under the effect of alcoholic beverages, and last but not the least, the will to use our resources judiciously to meet the basic needs of life and to build and augment those resources, human as well as economic and social, as rapidly as possibly.

Rajaji supported the policy equally emphatically. He said: "Public opinion in India among poor people is in favour of prohibition and will continue to be so in spite of the propaganda of the upper class whisky and brandy bibbers. These upper class drinkers can afford to pay for the liquor they consume and can fairly easily get special permits to waste their money and their health. They are for doing away with prohibition because they feel ashamed to ask for and obtain permits. The difficulty should be removed, they feel, if rich and poor, all were relieved from the Prohibition Law. The shame they feel is an index of the public opinion against drinking, and that makes all the difference between the American conditions which brought about a repeal of prohibition there and the conditions prevailing in India. Prohibition is the one great reform that gives a chance to the poor people to go up in social status and in family comfort."

The Governor warned Rajaji that prohibition would lead to loss of revenue and create serious difficulties for the province. Rajaji felt that "Drink revenue is a deceiver, even as the temporary stimulation that intoxicating drinks give is a deceiver. We do not want a revenue derived by opening the flood-gates of wasteful, unhealthy and ruinous expenditure by the poorest

families of the nation, who even now do not earn enough to meet the cost of normal healthy family life, owing to high prices, which cannot be held mechanically or by force but only by a great change in governments because just a little more revenue can be got out of it."

Rajaji however thought of a novel way of meeting the financial difficulties. He introduced Sales Tax. His argument was that money saved on drinks would be spent on household goods. When the Sales Tax Act was passed by the Legislature and sent to the Viceroy, there was an apprehension that the necessary assent might not be given to the Act, but Rajaji made New Delhi understand that his Ministry was likely to take the step of resigning if the assent was not forthcoming. Promptly assent was given by the Viceroy to the Sales Tax Act !] The sales tax has proved to be an important source of revenue to the governments of various States since then.

Rajaji introduced prohibition on an experimental basis. He started from his home district Salem. Four months after the introduction of prohibition A.F.W. Dixon, the then Collector of Salem wrote and Rajaji quoted him in his budget speech of March 1938 : "Viewing generally the effect of prohibition on the lives of the people, I am convinced after three months' experience that prohibition is providing a great boon to the poorer classes in this district. Leading as they do a hand to mouth existence, earning at the best barely enough to maintain the minimum standard of life necessary for health and strength, they simply cannot afford the expensive luxury of drink which used to reduce the small earnings of the labouring classes to a miserable pittance, quite insufficient for the proper maintenance of a family. Drinks brought misery into the homes of many thousands of the poor classes in this district, misery in the shape of domestic unhappiness, insufficiency of food and crushing debt. Already in thousands of homes in this district conditions have changed to a remarkable extent. Domestic brawls have ceased, a sufficiency of food is available, and the grip of money-lender has released. This has happened in a short space of four months. If this Act continues to be enforced no less effectively than it is now, I anticipate a great and

permanent improvement in the material well-being of the peasants and the labourers of this district."

From prohibition Rajaji turned his attention to removal of untouchability. Even when Rajaji was the chairman of the Salem municipality he had contributed to the removal of untouchability by allowing the so called untouchables to use public taps with the people of other communities. He even appointed a Harijan to work as a turn cock and in spite of great agitation from the people of Salem he did not change him. When Rajaji was the Premier of Madras a great supporter of the removal of untouchability, Vaidyanath Iyer, announced his decision to lead a batch of Harijans devotees into the Meenakashi temple in Madurai. It led to a lot of agitation on the part the Brahmins. But Iyer was undaunted. Under the then existing laws Iyer could be prosecuted and the orthodox Hindus intended to have him prosecuted. Rajaji got the legislation passed with retrospective effect allowing Harijans to enter the temples.

Rajaji's sympathies were with the poor and the down trodden. Next unscrupulous money-lenders became the target of his attack. The money lenders sucked the poor agriculturists who were generally in debt. They would charge exorbitant rate of interest and often it would be many time more than the principal. Rajaji got a Debt Relief Act passed that stipulated that interest could never be more than the principal. This idea is known as dum-dupat and it helped thousands of agriculturists in debt.

Rajaji was unique in resolving difficulties and deadlocks. V.V. Giri, who was the Minister of Industries in Rajaji's cabinet gives two concrete cases which reveal Rajaji's ability in handling difficult situations firmly without fear or favour. To quote him :

"There was a big trade dispute in the Madurai and Papanasa Mills owned by the Harveys in 1938, and the employers declared a lock-out. Nearly, 20,000 workers were faced with ordeal of willing to work and yet denied opportunity to do so. And, this lock-out continued for nearly three months. My attempts to make the employers take up a reasonable attitude was not successful and they decided to reopen the mills and

lift the lock-out on certain conditions which were against the interest of the workers. Their intention was to employ only those 'loyal' workers or recruit fresh hands, keeping out those whom they considered to be active trade union workers or 'inconvenient' to them. When I learnt of this, I suggested to Rajaji that the management should never be allowed to have their way and open the mills unless a satisfactory settlement was reached between the workers and themselves. I decided that an order under Section 144 Cr. P. C. should be issued against the management directing them not to open the mill till a settlement was arrived at. Rajaji was rather surprised at this unconventional approach but finally agreed with me that a drastic view must be taken in the matter in order to bring the erring employer to reason. When Rajaji telephoned to the Governor, who was at time at Ooty, informing him of the proposed step, the Governor, expressed his disagreement ; but Rajaji was firm and informed the Governor that if the views of the Government were not accepted, his Government would resign. Ultimately for the first time in the history of the country, Section 144 was imposed against the Management compelling the employers to climb down from their high pedestal and reach a final settlement with the workers. I am referring to this incident to show that once Rajaji takes a definite stand he sticks to it irrespective of consequences.

"Again, there was a stay-in strike of workers in a jute mill in Chitavalasa in 1939, and without much provocation and justification, Crombie, who was then the District Magistrate at Visakhapatnam, went into the mills and ordered firing at unarmed workers. When I assumed office as Minister for Labour in 1937, I had given a general direction to all the District Magistrates that whenever strikes or lockouts occurred, before firing or any strong action was to be taken, they should inform the representatives of the workers of their intentions and try to see whether such drastic actions could be avoided. I have always felt that a strike should not be treated as a law and order problem but should be dealt with more as a human one, and it was negotiation and conciliation that should be the method to resolve any deadlock. This firing as a result of Crombie's orders caused a wide stir and resentment among the workers not only

in Chitavalase but throughout Madras province. I advised Rajaji that this was a fit case for the appointment of a commission of Inquiry and he accepted my suggestion. And later, on the report of the Commission of Inquiry, Crombie was finally transferred from Waltair to Bellary."

When a person is holding a high office and especially an administrative one, he makes many enemies. It is all the more so in the field of politics. No wonder Rajaji was the target of attack from various quarters on various occasions. Many people wrote to Gandhi complaining about the Madras Premier's misdeeds and requesting him to instruct him and guide him. In response to there letters Gandhi wrote an article "Congressmen Beware" in the *Harijan* of 10th September, 1938 saying that he was not the keeper of Rajaji's conscience. This article brings out Rajaji's character and the regard which Gandhi had for him. It is best to reproduce the entire article. Gandhi wrote : I have been inundated with letters and wires complaining of what the senders have regarded as the Madras Premier's terrible misdeeds. I pick out two which have been the subject of adverse comment in many quarters in India. They are his policy about Hindustani and his employment of the Criminal Law Amendment Act for abating the picketing nuisance.

"My correspondents evidently think that I am the keeper of the Premier's conscience and that I have but to send instructions and they will be obeyed. They know my relations with Rajagopalachari. But I am not the keeper of anybody's conscience. much less of Rajaji's Let the reader share the secret with me that nobody among those who regard the Congress acceptance of truth and non-violence as the rule of their lives, fights me as strenuously as he does. But he has one essential virtue of a soldier. I became my own general of satyagraha and my first recruit in 1906. When I announced my generalship in 1918 in India, Rajaji was among those who enlisted themselves at the very commencement. It was under his roof that the inspirtation of the hartal of 6th April came to me. From that day to this his loyalty to his general has been beyond reproach or compare. And if as general I asked him to give up his premiership he would do so without demur. He may not even

agree with my judgment. But in battle he knows that a private has no judgment but his general's.

"But in spite of the exemplary loyalty that Rajaji gives me in common with many others, I will not issue the instructions my correspondents demand. Let the complainants know that we rarely correspond with each other. I know he has no time and he knows I have equally little for such correspondence. The law of satyagraha forbids such action. If he has to resign, he will do so in the constitutional manner. And there will be no fuss, no complaint. What is more to the point, I have boundless faith in his wisdom, his uprightness and his unsurpassed ability as a parliamentarian among Congressmen at least. He has to his credit no mean achievements. And those who think that he is wallowing in the constitution gutter are vastly mistaken. We have in our ranks no abler fighter in satyagraha. I see nothing wrong in a satyagrahi winning victories, without bluster, without wrangling but by conversion, by carrying conviction. The world will perhaps never know what Congress Premiers have been doing by forcing conviction upon Governors. Rajaji has been in the forefront among these. The greater the peaceful penetration, the greater the virtue of satyagraha. There is little room for *tamasha* in a fight for truth with truth and nothing but truth.

"It hurts me, therefore, when Congressmen decry him and think that he is so enamoured of office that he is afraid to do the right thing. All Congress Ministers naturally come in for trenchant criticism from those who dislike congress politics. Whatever is found in such criticism must be accepted with gratefulness. There is criticism that springs from party motives. Even that has to be borne. But when Congressmen take up the same cry, it becomes embarrassing. They have their remedy. They can complain to their Provincial Committees, and failing redress they can go to the Working Committee and finally to the A.I.C.C. Surely there is no room for criticism if all these remedies fail. But my greatest complaint against these critics is that they are too hasty or too lazy to acquaint themselves with facts. There is no sin greater than ignorance. I see daily verification of this great saying.

"My first advice then is that my numerous correspondents and those who think like them should first study facts as Rajaji and his Cabinet see them. If then they are not satisfied, they should move for redress in the manner indicated by me.

"I can give no direct help. There are limitations to the use of my influence with Congressmen. My retirement does mean non-interference with individual Congressmen in the discharge of their daily duty and even with the Working Committee except when it seeks my help or advice. Thus when Dr Khare came to me for guidance, I twice refused, saying that he should approach the Parliamentary Sub-Committee. Shri Shukla and Mishra were in urgent need. But to them also I had to say the same thing as I said to Dr Khare. If I do not observe these broad limitations, my retirement becomes meaningless. Indeed I do not follow the day-to-day doings of Congress now a days, whereas when I was in the Working Committee nothing escaped me and I used to scan everything and give guidance in detail in so far as my health permitted. But now I do not even study all the resolutions of the Working Committee.

"Let me now say a word about the two main grievances against Rajaji.

"There is nothing wrong in making a knowledge of Hindustani compulsory, if we are sincere in our declarations that Hindustani is or is to be the Rashtrabhasha or the common medium of expression. Latin was and probably still is compulsory in English schools. The study did not interfere with the study of English. On the contrary English was enriched by a knowledge of the noble language. The cry of mother tongue in danger is either ignorant or hypocritical. And where it is sincere it speaks little for the patriotism of those who will grudge our children an hour per day for Hindustani. We must break through the provincial crust if we are to reach the core of all-India nationalism. Is India one country and one nation or many countries and many nations ? Those who believe that it is one country must lend Rajaji their untinted support. If he has not the people behind him, he will lose his job. But it is

strange, if the people are not behind him, that he has his great majority with him. But what if he had not the majority behind him ? He must give up office but not his deepest conviction. His majority is worth nothing if it does not represent the Congress will. The Congress is wedded not to a majority; it is wedded to all that which will make this nation great and independent in the least possible time.

“And the picketing ? It is insufferable that youngsters or even grown-up people should assail homes and offices and howl unmentionable imprecations against those who are shouldering their burden amid the greatest difficulty. Until we have found the correct remedy in terms of satyagraha the Ministers must be permitted to deal with such offences in the manner they consider best. If they are not, the freedom that is possible under Congress Raj will soon degenerate into goondaism, pure and undefiled. That is the way not to salvation but it is the easiest road to perdition. And the Minister who is worth his salt will resolutely refuse to be a cause of the country's perdition.

“Lastly, the Criminal Law Amendment Act. We may not make a fetish of Congress resolutions, The Congress has objection not to the name but to the contents of an Act going under that name, and then, too, not to every word or section of the Act. I have never studied it but I see from Rajaji's public declaration that it contains a few sections which suit the new situation that the Congress is facing. If such is the case, Rajaji will be foolish if he does not make use of them. But he will be equally foolish, if not something worse, if he does not summarily repeal the obnoxious clauses of the Act without delay. It is a monster created by the fertile brain of the repressor of the country's liberty. It was used as much against satyagrahis. The sooner, therefore, those clauses go the better for Rajaji and the country. But let Congressmen beware of hanging their trusted servants before they are tried and found wanting.”

‘It may not be out of place to quote a few passages of tribute to Rajaji's Premiership from Lord Erskine the then Governor of Madras.

"When I first met Mr Rajagopalachari he was the leader of the Madras Provincial Congress Party and his party was then uncertain as to whether it would accept office under the 1935 Government of India Act.

"During the negotiations which ensued I had many private conversations with him and in the course of those talks, I think it became quite obvious to both of us that nothing but good could result from the Congress undertaking the heavy responsibilities of office. At any rate we agreed that we would find no difficulty whatever in working together for the good of the Madras Presidency. I have no doubt but that Mr Rajagopalachari's great influence had much to do with the eventful decision of the All India Congress to form ministries in the provinces.

"Later on, during his tenure of the post of Prime Minister of Madras. I came, of course, into the closest possible contact with him. Indeed there was hardly a day in that period when we did not either meet personally or correspond. I therefore got to know him intimately.

"I found him to be the best of friends, the most pleasant of colleagues and in regard to administrative matters, one of the ablest men I have ever met. Moreover his great ability and common sense were much admired by the senior officers of the I.C.S., who were themselves no mean judges of administrative competence.

"I suppose that the relationship between the British Governor and the leader of the Congress party, which had for so long been opposed to the Raj, may have been thought by the public to have been an uneasy one. But nothing could have been farther from truth.

"I do not know if Mr Rajagopalachari learnt anything from me, probably not; but I certainly learnt a great deal from him. Indeed I soon became convinced, from close contact with so outstanding a personality, that India would be very soon be well fitted to take her place amongst the free and independent nations of the British Commonwealth."

To Support Or Not To Support

In 1939, the international relations had so strained that World War II seemed imminent. It was in these circumstances that Subhas Bose, who had been the President at the Haripura Session, decided to contest again. Bose was essentially a soldier and he felt that the opportunity had come and they should give six months notice to the British and embark on Mass Civil Disobedience Movement. Bose suspected that the Working Committee might even accept the Federal Scheme. Gandhi, however, did not favour Subhas Bose's candidature and suggested the name of Maulana Azad for he felt that being a Nationalist Muslim he might ease the communal situation. The Maulana, however, declined to contest against Bose. Thereupon Gandhi recommended the name of Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

England tried to keep aloof for some time but when on 3rd September 1939 Germany attacked Poland, England declared

War on Germany. The next day the Viceroy without consulting either the leaders of the Congress or the Central Legislature announced that India, too, was at war with Germany. This annoyed the Congress leaders. They asked the Government to declare their war aims clearly. The people of India had not forgotten that for their help to the British during World War I, they were given only the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. They were not prepared to be fooled for the second time. The Working Committee of the Congress met in September 1939, discussed for one week the situation created by the outbreak of the War. On September 14, 1939 the Working Committee issued a statement extracts from which read as follows:

“The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for the imperialist ends. If co-operation is desired, (it) must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy . . . India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her. . .

“As the committee view the past events, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination, or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being, or are going to be, acted upon. The committee cannot associate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere. In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has been swifter than the working of men’s minds, the committee desire to take no final decision at this stage, so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future. The Congress Working Committee, therefore, invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged and, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to at present. The real test of any declaration is its

application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future."

The Congress Working Committee's Statement of September 14, was discussed at the meeting of A.I.C.C. held at Wardha on October 9, 1939 and the following resolution was passed by the A.I.C.C. on the War crisis:

"The Congress has been guided throughout by its objective of achieving the independence of the Indian people and the establishment of a free democratic state in India wherein the rights and interests of all minorities are preserved and safeguarded. The means it has adopted in its struggle and activities have been peaceful and legitimate, and it has looked upon war and violence with horror and as opposed to progress and civilization. In particular, the Congress has declared itself opposed to all imperialist wars and to the domination of one country over another.

"In spite of the repeated declarations of the Congress in regard to war, the British Government have declared India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people. The All-India Congress Committee, however, does not wish to take any decision precipitously and without giving every opportunity for the war and peace aims of the British Government to be clarified, with particular reference to India . . . While the committee condemns fascism and Nazi aggression, it is convinced that peace and freedom can only be established and preserved by an extension of democracy to all colonial countries and by the application of principle of self-determination to them, so as to eliminate the imperialist control. In particular, India must be declared an independent nation and at present application should be given to this status to the largest possible extent."

Gandhi was much disappointed by this resolution. He believed in non-violence. In the event of an invasion on India Gandhi wanted to meet the invaders non-violently. On October 10, 1939 he wrote in Harijan:

"In the course of the long conversation with the members of the Congress Working Committee, I discovered that their non-violence had never gone beyond fighting the British Government

with that weapon. I had hugged the belief that the Congressmen had appreciated the logical result of the practice of non-violence for the past twenty years in fighting the biggest imperialist power in the world. But in great experiments like that of non-violence, the hypothetical questions that when we had actually acquired independence, we would know whether we could defend ourselves non-violently or not. But, today, the question is no longer hypothetical. For, whether there is on the part of the British Government a favourable declaration or not, the Congress has to decide upon the course it would adopt in the event of an invasion of India. For though there may be no settlement with the Government, the Congress has to declare its policy and say whether it would fight the invading host violently or non-violently.

“So far as I can read the Working Committee’s mind after a fairly full discussion the members think that Congressmen are unprepared for non-violent defence against armed invasion.

He added, “My position is, therefore, confined to myself alone. I have to find out whether I have any fellow traveller along the lonely path. I am in the minority of one, I must try to make converts. But whether one or many, I must declare my faith that it is better for India to discard violence altogether even for defending her borders. For India to enter into the race for armaments is to court suicide. With the loss of India to non-violence, the last hope of the world will be gone. I must live up to the creed I have professed for the last half century, and hope to the last breath that India will make non-violence her creed, preserve the dignity of man, and prevent him from reverting to the type from which he is supposed to have raised himself.”

War had increased Gandhi’s faith in non-violence. Next year on June, 18, Gandhi wrote on “How to Combat Hitlerism”.

“Hitlerism will never be defeated by counter-Hitlerism. It can only breed superior Hitlerism raised to the nth degree. What is going on before our own eyes is a demonstration of the futility of violence, as also of Hitlerism.

“As against this, imagine the state of Europe today if the Czechs and the Poles, the Norwegians, the French and the English had all said to Hitler: ‘You need not make your

scientific preparation for destruction. We will meet your violence with non-violence. You will, therefore, be able to destroy our non-violent army without tanks, battleships and airships.' It may be retorted that the only difference would be that Herr Hitler would have got without fighting what he has gained after a bloody fight. Exactly. The history of Europe would then have been written differently. The possession might—but only might—have been then taken under non-violent resistance, as it has been taken after perpetration of untold barbarities. Under non-violence, only those would have been killed, who had trained themselves to be killed, if need be, but without killing anyone and without bearing malice towards anybody. I dare say, that in that case, Europe would have added several inches to its moral stature. And in the end, I expect, it is the moral worth that will count. All else is dross.

"I have written these lines for the European powers. But they are meant for ourselves. If my argument has gone home, is it not time for us to declare our changeless faith in non-violence of the strong, and say we do not seek to defend our liberty with the force of arms, but we will defend it with the force of non-violence?"

The Congress Working Committee which met at Wardha announced on June 21, 1940 that they were unable to extend the creed of non-violence to national defences. The Wardha decision left the working Committee, as desired by Rajaji, Nehru and others, to take free political decisions without having to think of their implications in terms of violence and non-violence. Rajaji was in favour of co-operating with the British in the war provided the entire field of central Government including defence was placed in charge of a national Government. Rajaji also felt that for the defence of the country an army was needed and a strong military police was needed for the internal administration of the country. Gandhi said:

"While Rajaji was developing his theme I felt that a wide gulf separated me from him. He thinks he will be best able to serve his country by taking advantage of every opportunity to serve the country. He takes office in that light. I differ fundamentally from him. He may satisfy himself with the illusion that he is serving non-violence. I am not afraid of

power. Some day or the other we will have to take it. The Viceroy is here to serve his country, its interests and therefore he must use all resources that India has mercilessly. If we participate in war effort, we shall have learnt some lesson in the art of violence, even if the Britishers are defeated. This will give us some experience, some power such as a soldier has but all this at the cost of independence. This seems to me the logical consequence of your resolution. This does not appeal to me. If we are non-violent I know how to deal with the situation. The vast majority of our people had violence in them, but they were taught the power of non-violence. There is confusion in the people now. It is not my interpretation which has caused it but the resolution itself. I cannot guide you in this atmosphere. Whatever I say will embarrass you.

"I told the Viceroy that the British, if they succeed, will not be better than Mussolini or Hitler. If there is peace with Hitler India will be exploited by all powers. But if we are non-violent and Japan comes we will see that they do not get anything without our consent. Non-violence has worked wonders in 20 years. We cannot do any such thing with violence. . .

Jawaharlal Nehru said: "The question was brought forward by Gandhiji in the world context. He wanted to place the message of non-violence before the world."

Gandhi replied: "Not exactly world context. I thought of the immediate problem. I did not have the world picture before me but India and India alone. In the position they have taken the Working Committee is free to render help and to prepare an army. It is free to take office. The Viceroy thought the resolution favoured him. He said: 'You want to defend India, you want aeroplanes, battle-ships, tanks, etc. We will give you all these. This will serve our purpose and also yours. This is the golden opportunity. You should come and get equipped. Under pressure we will go forward double speed.'"

"I regret the congress took what I considered as a backward step, but it is a perfectly honourable step. It has taken the only step that it could. I will still try to wean it and the rank and file from this mistake. If the rank and file feel with me the

Working Committee will retract the step. A larger issue of internal anarchy was before us. What contribution shall we make if anarchy overtakes us? Will the masses co-operate in the non-violent effort? I will test the masses and if I find that they will desert me I will shape my policy accordingly, but I won't collapse before they collapse. The terrible thing that are going on in Europe fill me with anguish. I do not know where I could come in there. I feel I can do something and hence the statement.

Private armies never appeal to me. The masses will be exploited by us. We will go and tell them you must give us your last penny to defend your hearths and homes. I cannot do this. This is not for me. I want to proclaim to the country that India will defend itself non-violently so far as the Congress is concerned.

C. Rajagopalachari objected: "I cannot go with Gandhiji in his conception of the State. Ours is a political organization not working for non-violence but for the political ideal. We are working in competition with other political parties.

Jawaharlal Nehru remarked: "I agree with Rajaji in his understanding of violence and non-violence; else we cannot function on the political plane.

Gandhi replied: "Very difficult questions have arisen in the course of the discussion. Rajaji has summarily rejected the idea that we can retain power by non-violent means. This was illustrated even when we attained it by non-violent means while the Congress was in office. To the extent they used violence the ministries failed. Their action showed bankruptcy of our non-violence. Perhaps we could not have done otherwise. I advised giving up of office. Rajaji however does not accept what I have said, that it is possible to hold office without the use of more than police violence."

Counselling people to have faith in non-violence, Gandhi said:

"I had not in the past the slightest difficulty in carrying Rajaji with me, his intelligence as well as his heart, but since this office question cropped up, I saw that our thoughts were running in different directions. I see that I cannot carry him now along with me. It is vital for me therefore to ask for absolution. Internal dissensions are a small thing. We have now concentrated sufficiently on them. If you cannot come to a decision about external aggression, you cannot come to a decision about internal dissensions. My mind does not make a vital distinction between the two. I have deliberately put in the resolution the expression 'open mind'. You have said that we can mount to power by non-violent means but you doubt the ability to retain and consolidate it except through an army. The little police force that I have in mind will not be sufficient to cope with big disorders unless we have, as a nation, sufficient non-violence in us, or in other words we apply non-violence to politics. The technique of non-violence is different from that of violence. We shut our eyes to the fact that our control on the masses, over even our registered Congressmen is ineffective. The negative response is there. In positive response both fail. It is not our fault exactly. Millions are concerned. Even a military programme could not have been complete in 20 years. We must therefore be patient. If the masses have won independence by non-violence, they can also retain it by non-violence.

The Congress Working Committee held an emergency meeting in Delhi from July 3, 1940 and pressed its demand for an immediate and unequivocal declaration of the full independence of India with a new proposal. Rajaji had drafted the following resolution for the consideration of the Working Committee meeting at Delhi:

"The Working Committee is of opinion that the proposals communicated by His Excellency the Viceroy in his conversation with Mahatma Gandhi do not meet the requirements of the present situation in any satisfactory manner.

"According to these proposals the claim of the Congress that the status of India should be declared by Britain to be one of complete independence remains unsatisfied. Any declaration

that India shall be in the same position as the self-governing countries in the British commonwealth does not meet the case of India. Nor has it any real meaning in the present state of world affairs.

“Apart from this end what is even more important in relation to the immediate activities in regard to Defence efforts,—the Working Committee is emphatically of the opinion that the Congress cannot withdraw its non-co- operation unless the entire field of central government including defence is immediately placed in charge of a national government, which, though formed *ad hoc* and as a transitory measure, should be so constituted as to command the confidence of all the elected elements of the Central Legislature and of the Responsible Governments in the provinces. Unless such a central national government is immediately formed, any efforts in the direction of the defence of India will not only be contrary to the fundamental principles of justice and democratic government, but will also prove utterly futile.”

Gandhiji's comment on Rajaji's draft were :

“If Rajaji's draft reflects the Congress mind it must be accepted. If it does not and if it is the personal opinion of some members it is necessary to know where the Congress mind lies. In order to know this at the present moment no resolution be passed. You must boldly face the situation. You must recognize that the non-violence that we have hitherto offered is different from true non-violence. The non-violence of the Congress represents only the resistance of the weak. It is passive resistance, the expression which was flung in my face in Africa and which I resisted. It does not satisfy me ; but the country will be free from the incubus of doubt. Whenever we have tried non-violence of the strong we have miserably failed

“The business of the members of the Working Committee should be to ascertain where the Congress mind lies. They should go to the provinces and quietly ascertain the opinion there. This will give us the opinion of the general run of Congressmen. We will then come with better and more accurate information. Each one may try to influence the members in his favour up to a

point. If we find that Rajaji's proposition reflects the popular will we should allow it to be worked. I am not satisfied with it. But then I pledge everything from the standpoint of non-violence."

After due considerations the Working Committee passed the following resolution on July 7, 1940 which came to be known as the Delhi resolution :

"The Working Committee have noted the serious happenings which have called forth fresh appeals to bring about a solution of the deadlock in the Indian political situation and in view of the desirability of clarifying the Congress position they have earnestly examined the whole situation once again in the light of the latest developments in world affairs.

"The Working Committee are more than ever convinced that the acknowledgement by Great Britain of the complete independence of India, is the only solution of the problems facing both India and Britain and are, therefore, of opinion that such an unequivocal declaration should be constituted at the Centre, which, though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature and secure the closest co-operation of the Responsible Government in the provinces.

"The Working Committee are of opinion that unless the aforesaid declaration is made, and a National Government accordingly formed at the Centre without delay, all efforts at organizing the material and moral resources of the country for Defence cannot in any sense be voluntary or as from a free country, and will therefore be ineffective. The Working Committee declare that if these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organization of the Defence of the country."

On July 8, 1940 commenting on the Delhi resolution Gandhiji wrote :

"Rajaji was the framer of the resolution. He was as certain of his position as I was of mine, His persistency, courage and utter humility brought him converts. Sardar Patel was his

greatest prize. He would not have even thought of bringing up his resolution if I had chosen to prevent him. But I give my comrades the same credit for earnestness and self-confidence that I claim for myself. I had long known that we were drifting away from each other in our outlook upon the political problems that face us. He will not allow me to say that his is a departure from ahimsa. He claims that his very ahimsa has led him to the point which culminated in his resolution. He thinks that I suffer from obsession owing to too much brooding on ahimsa. He almost thinks that my vision is blurred. It was no use my returning the compliment though half joking I did. I have no proof, save my faith, to question his counter faith. That is evidently absurd. I could not carry the committee with me at Wardha and so I got my absolution. I at once saw as clear as daylight that, if my position was not acceptable, Rajaji's was the only real alternative. I therefore encouraged him to persist in his effort, though all the while I held him to be hopelessly in the wrong. And by exemplary patience, skill and considerateness towards his opponents he got a good majority, five remaining neutral. I had a fearful moment. Generally such resolutions are not carried by the majority vote. But at this juncture unanimity was not to be expected. I advised that Rajaji's resolution should be enforced. And so at last moment the Committee decided that the resolution should go forth to the world.

"It was necessary for the public to have this background to the tremendous step the Committee have taken for good or ill. Those Congressmen who have a living faith in the non-violence of the strong will naturally abstain. For the moment, however, what they can do is wholly irrelevant. Rajaji's resolution represents the considered policy of the Congress. Non-Congressmen, who were eager for the Congress to be free of my religious bias to adopt a purely political attitude, should welcome the resolution and support it wholeheartedly. So should the Muslim League, and even the Princes who think of India more than their principalities.

The British Government have to make their choice. Independence they cannot withhold unless their wisdom is as much blurred as Rajaji claims that mine is. If independence is recog-

nized, the acceptance of the other part of the resolution follows as a matter of course. The question is : Do they want to impress help from India by virtue of their rulership over India, or will they have the help that a free and independent India can give ? My individual advice has already gone. My help always has been promised. Acceptance of that advice can but enhance their heroism. But if they cannot accept it, I advise, as a disinterested but staunch friend, that the British Government should not reject the hand of friendship offered by the Congress."

On August 5, 1940, Gandhiji wrote :

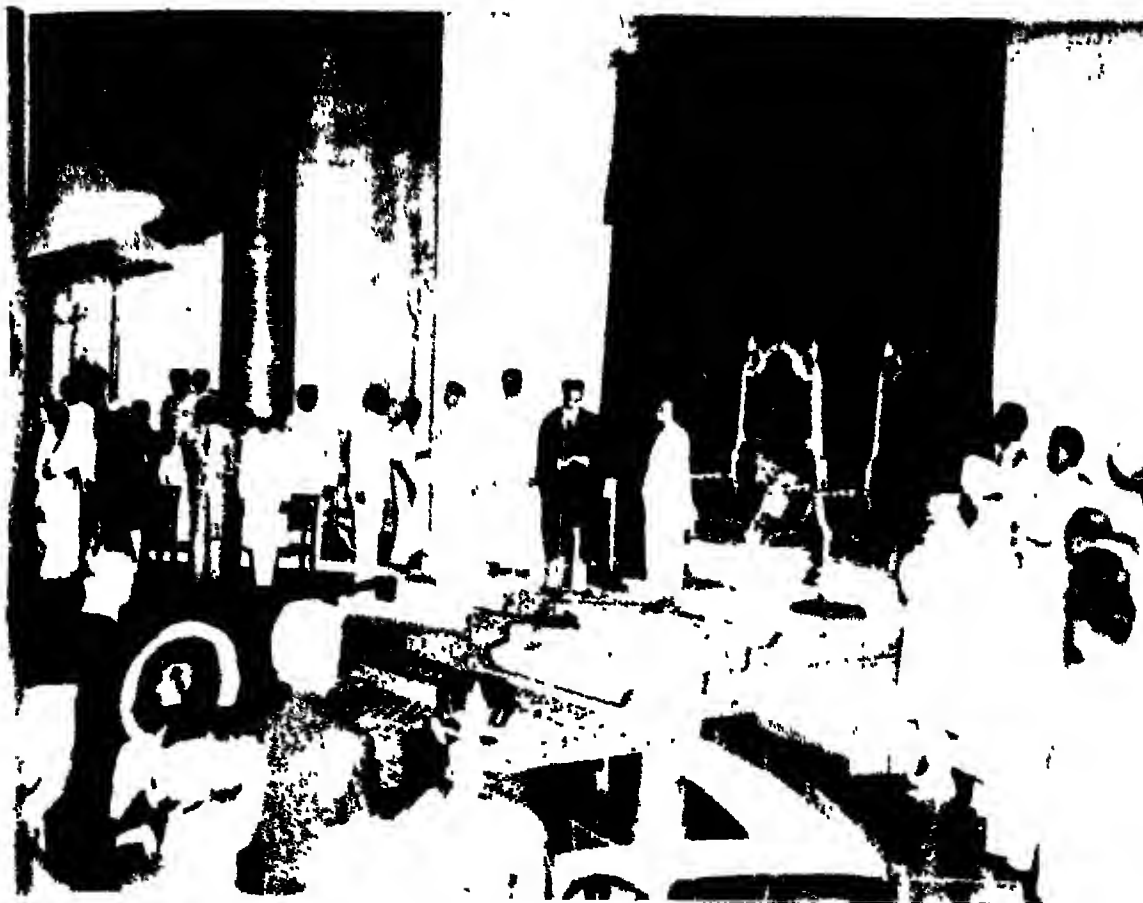
"Those who regard themselves as out-and-out votaries of non-violence and believe the step taken by Rajaji and others to be wrong, have to pass through a severe test. I have expressed my opinion in the clearest possible language. I believe that Rajaji has gone off the track. He believes that I have. The future alone will decide who is right."

The British Government rejected the offer contained in the Delhi resolution. The people felt that rejection of the Congress proposals is a proof of the British Government's determination to continue to hold India by the sword. An emergency meeting of the A.I.C.C. was convened at Bombay on September 15, 1940.

Maulana Azad was the President. He requested Mahatma Gandhi to assume the leadership of the Congress. He said : "These events made us decide to again request Mahatma Gandhi to assume the active leadership of the Congress. I am glad to inform you that he had agreed to do this, as now there is no difference whatsoever between the Working Committee and him. The Delhi resolution was a great obstacle in this way. But the offer contained in it having been rejected, there was no reason why he should not assume the leadership of the Congress. I must take this opportunity to make it quite clear that there was nowhere any intention to discard non-violence; only we did not feel sure if we would be able to meet every internal and external emergency without resort to force."

Gandhiji reaffirmed his faith in non-violence and said :

"There are many parties in the Congress. We are not all of the same opinion. There is indiscipline in the Congress. I know





it is inevitable in a mass organization which is growing from day to day. If it is all indiscipline and no discipline, the organization is on the downward path. Let it not be said of you that you come to the Congress although you do not believe in non-violence. How can you possibly sign the Congress pledge with violence in your breasts? I want complete obedience to the policy of non-violence. While the policy lasts, it is the same as though it was a creed, for so long as it holds good, it is as good as a creed. My creed holds me for life, yours, so long as you hold it. Resign from the Congress, and you are free from it. Let us be clear regarding the language we use and the thoughts we nurture. For, what is language but the expression of thought? Let your thought be accurate and truthful, and you will hasten the advent of *swaraj* even if the whole world is against you. You will have won *swaraj* without having to spend nine million pounds a day or without doing any of these things you will build up the majestic edifice of freedom.

“Now, for the violence party. Don’t mix up the methods: if you can help it. You have restrained yourselves for some years. Restrain yourselves for some more years. Ours is not a small battle. If you restrain yourselves, you will lose nothing.”

Commenting on the Rajaji’s offer Gandhiji said on 16th September 1940 :

“When Rajaji said to me that his own offer was easier for the British to accept than mine, he was expressing half the truth. It may be easy indeed for them to recognize our independence, but I can understand, during the war, their reluctance to grant us central responsible government. For once they grant it, they have to carry on through us. One day it may be Rajaji, another day it may be Jawaharlal, and then it may be a Damodar Menon. This co-operation that we offer them would be to them a commodity of doubtful value, for they do not trust us, and if I were in the Viceroy’s position, I should understand his misgivings. It is risky for them to carry on war through those whom they do not trust. But where is the risk in letting everyone declare that he is free to refuse all co-operation in war and preach that non-co-operation to everyone he comes across, unless they want to enforce co-operation at the point of the bayonet?”

While returning to Wardha from the Bombay Session of the A.I.C.C. Gandhi wrote in the train on 18th September, 1940 : It appeared in *the Harijan* of 22nd September 1940 under the heading "I Was Unjust because Weak."

"I know Rajaji enough to understand that he is too brave to need any support from anybody, he is too philosophic to harbour an injury for many hours, if not minutes. I know also that his fine sense of humour enables him to enjoy a joke at his expense. Therefore this confession must be taken as one for my own satisfaction only.

"I have told the public that, had I not egged him on, Rajaji would never have brought forward his resolution at New Delhi. Having great regard for his judgement and his honesty, when he asserted with amazing assurance that I was wrong and he was right in the implications and application of non-violence, I allowed myself to doubt the correctness of my interpretation to the point of allowing and encouraging him to act on his. I showed weakness and became unjust to him. A weak man is just by accident. A strong but non-violent man is unjust by accident. I was unjust to Rajaji because I exposed him to ridicule and unkind attacks. Though no ultimate harm has come to the Congress because what I still consider was an error has been rectified, it is not a good thing for a great leader to have his work undone all of a sudden, for I know that Rajaji still feels that he was right. If his view had prevailed the resolution that now holds sway would not have taken the shape it has. I would still have been out of the Congress. For I was out of it at Wardha before the Delhi resolution was taken as the natural outcome of Wardha.

"If I was unjust to Rajaji, I was also unjust to the Working Committee. For, had I remained firm, the Wardha resolution too would have been passed. I hold that, so long as I am accepted as the sole authority on satyagraha and its implications, they must not be a matter of vote. My colleagues may debate the pros and cons with me and try to convince me that their interpretation is right. If I cannot accept it, my judgement should prevail because I am both the author of satyagraha and general in satyagraha action. The only way the colleagues can

avoid my judgement is by absolving me from guidance. They did in so many words at Wardha. But it is plain that the absolution was not what the word means. They were most unwilling to give me absolution. It was given because I wrung it from them. My weakness began at Wardha. When a serious crisis arose, I should have raised the issue of jurisdiction. It was outside the Working Committee's jurisdiction to decide upon the meaning and application of a matter which belonged to their expert who was their interpreter and executive officer.

"I am aware that all the members of the Working Committee do not accept my opinion as to jurisdiction. The matter has not come up for decision. But before the Committee and I came to the resolution now before the country I had made the confession I have now published for the sake of an esteemed co-worker.

"It is my conviction that, owing to a series of fortunate combination of acts of the members at the last Wardha meeting, the present resolution was conceived and we have been saved from national disaster. We have come to a decision which, if Congressmen react to it as they should, must raise India to a position which it has never yet occupied and brings it nearer to her goal as nothing else could have done.

"Whether my estimate is right or wrong time alone can show. But this is merely by the way. Nor is the purpose of this confession to invite the reader to accept my judgement as to the jurisdiction of the Working Committee. The mention of it was relevant to show the nature of my error. It is unpardonable for a general to surrender his judgement to a fellow officer unless the conviction goes home to him that the latter is right—not may be right.

"I hope I have given the public enough material to show that in all that Rajaji did he was throughout brave and correct. The incorrectness was due to me.

"And I wish to say the same thing about his 'sporting offer'. It is no part of this confession to defend it. But so far as I can see, the offer was truly sporting, if the correctness of the Poona resolution be accepted. It should be remembered that the Muslim

League is a great organization wielding influence upon the Muslims of India. The Congress had dealt with it before, and I have no doubt it will deal with it in future. However mistaken Qaid-e-Azam may be in our estimation, let us give him the same credit for honesty of purpose as we claim for ourselves. When the war cloud is lifted and when India comes to her own, surely Congressmen would just as much welcome a Muslim, a Sikh, a Christian, or a Parsi as Premier, as they would a Hindu, and even a non-Congressman, no matter of what faith he may be. I am sure that Rajaji's 'sporting offer' meant no more and no less than this. When passions have died, critics will read his offer in its proper light. It is wrong to misjudge a public worker, and doubly so, when he happens to be of Rajaji's calibre. He has lost nothing by the misjudgement. But a nation may easily harm itself by misjudging its true servants and denying itself their services. Above all, when the Congress may have to embark upon a great non-violent struggle for fundamental liberty, it behoves Congressmen to guard against harsh, hasty and uncharitable judgements."

Rajaji sent a rejoinder to this which Gandhi published in his *Harijan* under the heading "Rajaji's Postscript". It ran :

"I had the advantage of reading the leading article of September 22 in manuscript at Poona through the courtesy of Shri Chandrashanker. I quite understand why you wrote the article, but I wished I could stop its publication or add my remarks to it. Reading the article in print now I think I had better explain my position.

"I do not feel that you exposed me to any ridicule. I was not worried over the attacks made at Bombay on the Poona resolution. I am not the least bit sorry for the Poona resolution. It expressed what we felt was the right thing to do under the circumstances. The British Government did not agree, and in consequence the proposal has failed. That, however, does not make any difference as to the validity of the reasons that led to it. Almost the entire body of intelligent public opinion in India welcomed the Poona resolution. You, of course, considered it wrong because it involved participation in war, be it even for the defence of India. There were some who feared that the

resolution might be accepted by the British Government and involve us in co-operation with Britain which was distasteful to them. There are some people for whom the deciding consideration is success. They feel it a disgrace to make a proposal which is turned down. There are again some who desire the maturing of chaos in which alone they see hope for the future of our country, and they would oppose anything that would retard the progress of this fermentation of chaos. Barring these groups the vast body of enlightened opinion in the country enthusiastically approved of the proposal made at Poona, namely, that if Britain acknowledged the right of India to the status of an independent nation and set up a truly national government composed of leaders of the various groups among the present elected legislators in the Central Assembly, the deadlock should stand resolved. You hold the view that the Congress should as from now work for the abolition of war. The fulfilment of our national goal is inextricably connected, according to you, with that mission. You are, therefore, of opinion that it is a grievous error to participate in the present war effort under any conditions. I believe also that the world should preach peace and abolish wars as soon as possible. But the pathway to it lies, in my opinion, in education in the highest sense in international co-operation and not in finding alternative weapons to defeat one another's ambitions and aims. Unlike you, I do not feel glad that the British rejected our offer on the ground that it has saved us our pacifism.

"I do not support the Bombay resolution because the Poona resolution was wrong. My support is based on the following grounds:

"It is wrong for the British to declare that the Indian people were in a state of war against any other nation without asking them about it. War does not mean only payment of some money and manufacturing armaments. It can easily lead up to all that is happening in London, and should be dealt with on that footing. Four hundred millions of human beings cannot be thrown into such a condition against their own will or without asking them. It is possible for us to recognize the justice of Britain's case against Germany without having to join in it and extend the tragedy beyond the necessary limits. America refused

to enter the war though it may give judgement in favour of Britain. We have not entered the Sino-Japanese war in spite of the justice of China's cause.

“The Poona proposal sought to make participation consistent with self-respect and fruitful. But the proposal was rejected by the British Government. India is therefore, entitled to refuse to participate in the war. But she is forced to contribute and participate on the basis that India is an imperial possession without any independent status or the right to choose between war and neutrality. The case for Britain is that the help taken from India is voluntary. This claim can be justified, or at least the objection can be reduced to the minimum, if those who preached non-participation are not suppressed by imprisonment. It could then be claimed that such Indian co-operation that comes in spite of such appeals against participation is truly voluntary. This much should be conceded to mitigate the offence of dragging the Indian people into the horrors of modern war without their consent.”

“ My Successor ? ”

The Congress had been pressing for an immediate, unequivocal and full independence for India. But the British Government, was in no mood to oblige. They had been evading the issue on the grounds of communal differences mainly between the Hindus and the Muslims and to safeguard the interests of the depressed classes and the minorities.

Winston Churchill was frank enough to say that he had not become “the King’s First Minister in order to preside at the liquidation of the British Empire.” The Viceroy also reiterated that, “at the end of the War they will be very willing to enter into consultation with the representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in framing such modifications as may seem desirable.”

In the third week of March 1940, the Congress session was held at Ramgarh in Bihar. The Congressmen pressed Gandhi to start a civil disobedience movement. Gandhi agreed to "undertake the responsibility of declaring civil disobedience movement when he is satisfied that they are observing strict discipline and are carrying out the constructive programme prescribed in the Independence pledge."

Gandhiji hesitated in starting civil disobedience movement on a mass scale for the fear that Muslims would oppose it and that it would lead to violence. At the same time if the congress was to keep its hold on the masses some steps had to be taken. After the Bombay Session of the Congress held in September 1940, Gandhiji thought of a unique type of satyagraha, called Individual Satyagraha. The satyagrahis were selected by Gandhiji. They had to intimate in writing to the Government about their intention to start satyagraha and also had to mention the date, time and place of their satyagraha. To cause the least inconvenience to the Government no satyagraha could be started on Sundays or holidays or at late hours. At the end of the meeting the satyagrahis were to say that "it is wrong to help the War effort with men or money."

This Individual Satyagraha succeeded for some time in sustaining the morale of the people. Vinoba Bhave was the first to offer Individual Satyagraha. On October 17, 1940 he solemnly inaugurated the Individual Satyagraha movement by delivering an anti-war speech at Paunar. He delivered speeches for three days. On October 21, he was arrested and sentenced to three months imprisonment. He was followed by Nehru and Patel, who were soon arrested. Over thirty thousand people in various places thus offered satyagraha and were arrested.

Gandhiji noticed that Individual Satyagraha had not much effect. So he suspended it on 3rd December. The Government released all satyagrahi prisoners.

On 23rd December 1941, A.I.C.C. met at Bardoli after fourteen months to assess the situations as it had developed. After reviewing the situation for a week they came to the following conclusions.

"While there has been no change in the British policy towards India, the Working Committee must nevertheless take into full consideration the new world situation that has arisen by the development of the war into a world conflict and its approach to India. The sympathies of the Congress must inevitably lie with the people who are the subject of aggression and who are fighting for their freedom but only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in the furtherance of the larger causes that are emerging from the storm of war.

"The whole background in India is one of hostility and of distrust of the British Government and not even the most far-reaching promises can alter this background, nor can a subject India offer voluntary or willing help to an arrogant imperialism which is indistinguishable from the fascist authoritarianism. The committee is, therefore, of opinion that the resolution of the A.I.C.C. passed in Bombay on September 16, 1940 holds today and defines the Congress policy still."

The Working Committee appreciated Gandhi's leadership but Gandhi was no longer a leader. He stood for complete non-participation in war under all circumstances and asked the Committee to relieve him of the responsibility laid on him by the Bombay resolution.

Gandhi explained the implications of the Bardoli resolutions, in a speech on 5th January 1942, to the members of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee : "The resolution means that if the Government gave a guarantee that full freedom be given after the war, the Congress would give help in keeping this empire alive. It was not that the bargain had been actually made, but the terms had been agreed upon, whereas, I did not want to enter into any bargain at all. I should plainly say so. If you feel that on your agreeing to offer full co-operation in the war effort India will have complete Independence after the war, that the British will thereafter remain in India at your mercy and sufferance, that even during the war you will run your own affairs, provided, of course, that your Defence Minister will carry on the war to victory, you must confirm the Bardoli resolution. The temptation is very great indeed. If for that sake

you are ready to reverse the policy of the Congress and purchase *swaraj* and pay as price thereof *ahimsa*, you must then confirm the resolution. Remember that the very greatest of our leaders are party to the resolution and they have not chosen to do so lightly. As against this, there are those who think that *ahimsa* is a pearl of great price and that it cannot be given up and that it can never be the price of *swaraj*, then their position is different. But if you are in doubt, if you feel that in sticking to *ahimsa* you lose both *ahimsa*—because you are incapable of it—and *swaraj*, that Gandhi is a good man but it would be prudent not to go the whole length with him, then you must accept the resolution. Only those will express their disapproval of it who are sure in their heart of hearts that prudence, political insight, policy and every consideration demands that *ahimsa* may not be sacrificed for *swaraj* ”

The A.I.C.C. met at Wardha in the mid January, 1942. Gandhi spoke to the members stressing his faith in non-violence. Yet he did not want to divide the house. So he appealed to the house to pass the resolution. He said, “Non-violence has brought us near to *swaraj* as never before. We dare not exchange it even for *swaraj*. For *swaraj* thus got will be no true *swaraj*. The question is not what we will do after *swaraj*. It is whether under given conditions we can give up non-violence to win *swaraj*. Again do you expect to win real independence by abandoning non-violence ? Independence for me means the independence of the humblest and the poorest amongst us. It can't be obtained by joining the war. For the Congress to join any war before the attainment of Complete Independence is to undo the work of the past twenty years.

“And yet why is it that I stand before you to plead with you to accept the resolution, and not even to divide the house ? The reason is that the resolution reflects the Congress mind. It undoubtedly is a step backward. We have not a clean slate to write on. Our elders have taken a step which has produced world-wide reaction. To alter the resolution out of shape is to ignore these. It would be unwise to change the policy adopted by the Working Committee. The world had a right to think that the Working Committee's policy would be endorsed by you.

At one time I had thought of dividing the A. I.C.C., but I saw it would be a mistake. It would be almost violence. Non-violence does not act in the ordinary way.

"Sometimes a step back is a prelude to a step forward. And it is highly likely that our step will be of that character

"The resolution is a mirror in which all groups can see themselves. The original was Jawaharlalji's draft, but it was referred to a sub-committee at whose hands it has undergone material changes. The original had left no room for Rajaji to work. The sub-committee opened a tiny window for him to squeeze in. Jawaharlalji's opposition to participation in the war effort is almost as strong as mine, though his reasons are different-Rajaji would participate if certain conditions acceptable to the Congress were fulfilled.

He denied that there was any rift between him and Jawaharlal Nehru. He said, "Somebody suggested that Pandit Jawaharlal and I were estranged. It will require much more than difference of opinion to estrange us. We have had differences from the moment we became co-workers, and yet I have said for some years and say now that not Rajaji but Jawaharlal will be my successor. He says that he does not understand my language, and that he speaks a language foreign to me. This may or may not be true. But language is no bar to a union of hearts. And I know this that when I am gone he will speak my language.

Replying to a question in the Question Box of *Harijan* that "What will happen to your ahimsa when your legal heir Nehru advocates violence and Rajaji wants arms and military training for the whole nation? Gandhi replied: "As you have put it, the situation does not appear awful. But it really is not so awful as it appears to you. In the first instance, 'legal heir' is not my phrase. I had spoken in Hindi. I had said that he was not my 'legal heir' but that he was virtually my heir. That means that he will take my place, when I am gone. He has never accepted my method in its entirety. He has frankly criticized it, and yet he has faithfully carried out the Congress policy largely influenced, when it was not solely directed by me. Those like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who have followed me

without question cannot be called heirs. And everybody admits that Jawaharlal Nehru has the drive that no one else has in the same measure. And have I not said also that when I am gone, he will shed the differences he often declares he has with me? I am sorry that he has developed a fancy for the guerilla warfare. But I have no doubt that it will be a nine days' wonder. It will take no effect. It is foreign to the Indian soil. Twenty-two years' incessant preaching and practice of non-violence, however imperfect it has been, could not be suddenly obliterated by the mere wish of Jawaharlal and Rajaji, powerful though their influence is. I am, therefore, not perturbed by the 'apostasy', either of Jawaharlal or Rajaji. They will return to non-violence with renewed zest, strengthened by the failure of their effort. Neither goes to violence for his belief in it. They do so because they think probably that India must have a course of violence before coming to non-violence."

In spite of their differences Gandhi had faith in Rajaji and both freely exchanged their innermost thoughts. This is evident from a letter which Gandhi wrote to Rajaji on 2nd March, 1942. It runs : 'What you say is not brutal. Fear is writ large on our faces. Fear of doing wrong, fear of running into the imaginary enemy's trap, is all species of fear and dangerous at that. However, you have to submit till you patiently convert your companions. They are the best material we have. And it is from that what we have to weave the national fabric. What about the Quaid-e-Azam.'

On March 7, 1942 Japanese forces occupied Rangoon and it seemed that they would soon enter into Bengal and Madras. The British Government needed India's full support on defence against Japan. So Churchill announced on March 11, 1942 that the War Cabinet had agreed on a plan for India and sent Cripps Mission to India. Cripps reached India on March 23. He met many leaders including Gandhi, Patel, Nehru, Maulana Azad and Jinnah. Cripps's proposals envisaged granting of Dominion Status at the end of the War. A provision allowed any province or area that wished to do so to secede from the Indian Union and form a separate Dominion. In fact Gandhi asked Cripps 'How could you, a friend of Russia and India,

be a party to this ? I wonder why you undertook this mission." The proposals were considered to be poison for India and were not acceptable to any party. They were denounced as "a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank". No wonder Cripps mission failed.

Rajaji was verry sorry that Cripps proposals could not be accepted. He tried to persuade the national leaders not to reject the Cripps offer. He brought out a book "The Way Out" expressing his regrets over the rejection of the Cripps proposals and suggesting to the leaders—Congressmen and others to reconsider them again. To quote him, "That the mission failed to produce any result covering the war-period is one of the major political disasters of India. Whoever may be held responsible morally for this failure, the Congress cannot be acquitted of the charge of not displaying the required ability for successful negotiation. For it is the business of those who negotiate for a nation to take into account all the sins that other people are likely to commit. Those who take charge of the ship should know the shoals and the rocks through which they must steer it.

"The propaganda that seeks to place on the Congress the responsibility for the failure of the Cripps Mission threatens to overwhelm the truth and hide it so deep that it will require academic research a century hence to discover the truth. Mr Amery, as recently as 18 October 1943, while reviewing the work of Lord Linlithgow, asserted that Mahatma Gandhi brought about the rejection of Sir Stafford Cripps offer. That this is not true and that Mahatma Gandhi left it entirely to the Congress President and Mr Nehru to continue the negotiations and reach decisions has been emphatically stated more than once. When Sir Stafford Cripps, in a press interview in London on 16 June 1942, said "The assurance that the Congress Working Committee had accepted the proposals came through the press and other sources. Then further consultations took place in which I understand Mr Gandhi was consulted and, after some further delay, the Congress finally turned down the proposals', Mr Jawaharlal Nehru promptly contradicted this story and issued a press statement as follows.

‘Sir Stafford’s statement to the effect that the Congress Working Committee had apparently accepted the proposals and it was only after further consultations with Gandhiji that they were turned down is entirely incorrect. After Gandhiji left Delhi there was no consultation with him of any kind and it is entirely wrong to imagine that the rejection was due to his pressure. Sir Stafford appears to hint that our rejection was largely due to Gandhiji’s adherence to non-violence. This also is wholly incorrect. No question of violence or non-violence arose in our talks or in our consideration of the subject. We rejected the proposals purely on political grounds.’

Gandhiji also wrote to the same effect in the *Harijan* of 28 June 1942. Sir Stafford Cripps himself subsequently withdrew his original statement in support of this legend. This convenient story, however, has not been given up, as Mr Amery’s recent statement shows.

The true causes of the breakdown were two-fold. One, indirect, was the lukewarm attitude of the Viceroy towards the negotiations that were initiated by Sir Stafford Cripps ; and the other, the direct cause, was the exaggerated importance attached on both sides to the Viceroy’s veto during the interim Government. On the part of the Congress, it was thought that with the British veto round their necks national leaders could play no effective role in the Government. The British Government, on their side, ignored the fact that for the duration of the war the control of defence policy and the administration of military affairs had all been disposed of in favour of retention in British hands, so that, in substance, the importance of the Governor-General’s veto had vanished. Sir Stafford failed at the critical moment to realize this and use his influence with the British Government and the Viceroy to prevent a breakdown. In 1937 it was found possible to set aside the Provincial Governors’ veto because then the Viceroy’s heart was in it ; but this was not the case in 1942, though the points involved in the viceregal veto and the risks to be taken by its abeyance were no greater.

“Whatever the cause, the opportunity was lost. Looking back it is now easy to see that, even though the Mission ended in failure, the sending of it and the effort made displayed great

political insight which gave a distinct advantage to the British Government and effectively saved it from attacks in Allied quarters. There are many in Congress circles who see this clearly, indeed so clearly, that they find in it the very motive of the Mission and believe that on the British side there was no sincere desire for a settlement. They believe that the Mission came to talk, pretend, fail and go back precipitately. This is a theory that cannot stand examination. It is a gross injustice to Sir Stafford Cripps apart from its being altogether untenable. For had the Congress expressed its acceptance, the British Government would have had to carry out what had been done on their behalf. They took the risk of having to transfer power during the war—besides committing themselves to a declaration of Indian freedom after the war—because they saw that it would benefit them to do so ; and they saw also that even if the negotiations failed, it would stand them in good stead when explaining their position to America and to rest of the world. While, thus, the rejection on our part betrayed a lamentable lack of that same quality. It was a great mistake to have broken off negotiations when, for whatever reasons, the British Government were in their most yielding mood.”

Rajaji appealed to the people for a rectification of their mistake. He said “It has been solemnly reiterated on behalf of the British Government that the Cripps proposals have remained open and will remain open. It is neither diplomacy nor the way of non-violence to refuse to accept a statement of this kind. If the proposals themselves are examined and found worthy of acceptance, it is not open to reasonable men, whose minds do not run in the path of armed rebellion to tell the British Government, ‘You do not mean it ; you will not carry out your promise’. At the worst, we should accept their challenge and leave it to them to break their word. The question to be decided, therefore, is whether the proposals are honourable and good, i.e., consistent with the attainment of the national goal.

The proposals brought by Sir Stafford Cripps are as follows:

His Majesty’s Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfilment of the

promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realization of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.

His Majesty's Government therefore make the following declaration :

(a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.

(b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body.

(c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the Constitution so framed subject only to :

(i) the right of any Province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so desires.

With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution, giving them the same full status as the Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

(ii) the signing of a Treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution making body. This Treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities; but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to the other Member States of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its Treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation.

(d) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities :

Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial election which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of the representatives of British India as a whole, and with the same powers as the British Indian members.

(e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new Constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organizing to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the people of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

The resolution of the Congress Working Committee rejecting these proposals did not by itself throw light on the causes of

the failure of the negotiations. The correspondence that passed between the Congress President and Sir Stafford Cripps must be read in order to see wherein the difficulty arose that led to the failure of the Mission.

According to Rajaji negotiations broke down over the interim arrangements for the war-period and not over the proposals for the future. "As for the latter it is not possible to improve upon the precision and the completeness of the declaration that the object of the plan is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.' This declaration was clarified so as to explain that the Indian Union, having initially been constituted as a Dominion, could at its will and through appropriate constitutional procedure secede from the British Commonwealth. The proposals include a simple and precise procedure for the framing of the future constitution according to the principle of the self-determination of each unit. The offer is that, as soon as hostilities cease, elections to the provincial Legislatures will be held, and that the provincial Assemblies, forming an electoral college, will elect one tenth of their number as a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed, subject to two conditions.

"The first condition gives to every province the right not to accede to the Indian Union. The second insists on a treaty covering all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands, including provisions for the protection of racial and religious minorities. Lest this or any other of the provisions should be construed as a trick by which complete transfer of power might be avoided, it was added that His Majesty's Government would not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in the future relationship to the other Member States of the British Commonwealth, which description includes Britain."

The following answers were publicly elicited at the press conference which Sir Stafford Cripps held during the negotiations.

Q : Will the Indian Union be entitled to disown its allegiance to the Crown ?

Sir Stafford Cripps : Yes... it will be completely free either to remain within or to go without the Commonwealth of Nations.

Q : Will the Indian Union have the right to enter into a treaty with any other nation in the world ?

A : Yes.

Q : What about the Governor-General ?

A : The constitution-making body will be free to deal with that question as it chooses.

Q : Exactly at what stage does the British Government propose to leave this country ?

A : As soon as the constitution-making body has framed a new constitution to take the place of the old one, the British Government undertake to accept and implement the new one; and the moment the new constitution comes into operation, the change-over takes place.

Q : Will India be represented at the Peace Conference ?

A : Certainly.

Rajaji felt that it may be possible to "improve the language and minor particulars of the Cripps proposals. But the British Government could not offer a scheme going further than that embodied in those proposals on the point of national independence. It is indeed not easy to conceive what more we could have asked to which constitutional lawyers could possibly agree."

Rajaji firmly believed that nothing could be achieved unless Congress and League came to an agreement. He advised the League to be reasonable in their demands and the Congressmen to be liberal in accepting them. He wrote, "It is my firm belief that had there been a Gandhi-Jinnah meeting in May 1943, we

would have had a Congress-League pact with far-reaching potentialities resulting in the solution of the constitutional issue, the end of the present deadlock and the transfer of the responsibility for the administration, both at the Centre and in the provinces, to popular leaders. A great chance was lost. It is not relevant here to seek to apportion blame for this. Errors cannot, however, be allowed to wreck all hope for the future. The Muslim League cannot for ever live on demands but one day will see the need for an actual settlement on reasonable terms. There is a great deal of loose talk that may serve immediately as convenient propaganda against one or the other side, but such talk only serves to make the solution of a difficult problem more difficult and postpones the day of freedom and honour.

“Indian nationalism should make up its mind clearly on how far it is prepared to go and draw the line beyond which it would deem it more honourable for the present to remain under British rule than to make any further concessions to the Muslim League. This arises out of the sanction employed by the Muslim League, viz., non-co-operation with the Congress. If the Congress invented and used the weapon of non-co-operation against the British power, the League is using the same weapon against the Congress, which has therefore to decide at what point the malady may be deemed more bearable than the remedy. While, on the one hand, I plead for accommodation to the Muslim League up to the farthest possible limit, I want the League also to realize that the sanction available to them—non-co-operation in the cause of national freedom and submission to British rule in the interval—is at best a poor and ugly sanction. The implication in the tactics of obstruction, even in its best form, is that the other party cares more and he who applies it cares less for that which is delayed. On the one hand it cannot be assumed that the Hindus will not at some point begin to prefer to make the best of things as they stand at present rather than agree to what they honestly deem to be an unreasonable demand; and this may happen in spite of everything the Congress may declare or do. Indeed, signs are not wanting from which one may infer that this process has already begun. On the other hand, even if all the elder Muslim politicians were to nurse the notion that the

Hindus must finally yield because to all appearances they are so frantically attached to the goal of complete independence, Muslim youth would surely rebel against the assumption of their relative indifference to the goal of independence which is involved in this argument."

Maulana Azad later wrote in his book *India Wins Freedom* about the attitude of Rajaji towards the Cripps Mission. Rajaji was the first to appreciate the League's demand for a separate Pakistan. To quote Azad, "So far as Congress was concerned, this was the way the Cripps Mission came to an end. It was not however the case with Jawaharlal and Rajagopalachari. Before passing on to the next phase in the story of India's struggle for freedom, I would like to make a special reference to their reaction to these events.

"Jawaharlal gave an interview to the representative of the *News Chronicle* soon after Cripps left. The whole tone and attitude of the interview appeared to minimize the difference between Congress and the British. He tried to represent that though Congress has rejected the Cripps offer, India was willing to help the British.

The second person on whom the negotiations had a profound effect was Shri Rajagopalachari. He had for some time been deeply disturbed by the deteriorating communal situation in the country. It was his view that the independence of India was held up because of the differences between the Congress and the League. My reading of the situation was that the British did not wish to take any risks during the period of the war and the differences among the communities gave them a pretext for keeping the power in their hands. Rajagopalachari did not agree and soon after the rejection of the Cripps offer, he began to say openly that if only the Congress would accept the League's demands, the obstacles to Indian freedom would be removed. Not content with expressing this view generally, he sponsored a resolution in the Madras Congress Legislature Party to the following effect. 'The Madras Legislature Congress Party notes with deep regret that the attempts to establish a National Government for India to enable her to face the problems arising out of the present grave situation have failed and that, as a result of this.

Nationalist India has been placed in a dilemma. It is impossible for the people to think in terms of neutrality or passivity during an invasion by an enemy power. Neither is it practicable to organize any effective defence independently and un-co-ordinated with the defence measure of the Government. It is absolutely and urgently necessary in the best interests of the country at this hour of peril to do all that the Congress can possibly do to remove every obstacle in the way of the establishment of a national administration to face the present situation, and therefore, as much as the Muslim League has insisted on the recognition of the right of separation of certain areas from United India upon the ascertainment of the wishes of the people of such areas as a condition precedent for a united national action at this moment of grave national danger, this party is of opinion and recommends to the All-India Congress Committee that to sacrifice the chances of the formation of a national Government at this grave crisis for the doubtful advantage of maintaining a controversy over the unity of India is a most unwise policy and that it has become necessary to choose the lesser evil and acknowledge the Muslim League's claim for separation; should the same be persisted in when the time comes for framing a constitution for India and thereby remove all doubts and fears in this regard and to invite the Muslim League for consultation for the purpose of arriving at an agreement and securing the installation of a National Government to meet the present emergency.'

"Rajagopalachari had not consulted me before he sponsored this resolution. Nor, as far as I was aware had he consulted any of our other colleagues. I was greatly disturbed when I read of the resolution in the papers. If one of my colleagues in the Working Committee went about preaching against the decision of Congress, it would not only weaken the decision of Congress, it would not only weaken the discipline of the organization but create confusion in the public mind and give a handle to the imperial power. I accordingly felt that the matter should be discussed by the Working Committee.

"I told Rajagopalachari that the resolutions passed by the Madras Legislature were not consistent with the declared policy

of the Congress. As a responsible member of the Working Committee, he should have avoided all association with such resolutions. If he felt strongly on the subject, he should have discussed the matter with his colleagues in the Working Committee before giving expression to his views. If the Working Committee did not agree with him it was open to him to resign and then propagate his views.

"Rajagopalachari admitted that he should have talked the matter over in the Working Committee before the resolutions were moved in the Madras Legislature. He was, however, unable to withdraw the two resolutions, as they represented his considered view. He addressed a letter to me in which he expressed his regret for publicly ventilating his views on a highly controversial question before consulting the President. I give the text of his letter below :

"With reference to your observation on the resolution passed on my motion by the Madras Congress Legislative Party, I admit that I should have talked the matter over with you and other colleagues of the Working Committee before moving the resolutions, knowing as I did their disagreement on the subject I write this to express my regret.

"I have explained to you already how strongly I feel. I believe that I should be failing in my duty if I do not endeavour to get people to think and act in the direction which my conviction leads to. I feel that in the public interests I should move the resolutions already notified by Mr Santanam. I desire, therefore, to request you to permit me to resign my place in the Working Committee.

Let me tender my grateful thanks for the unqualified trust and affection bestowed on me by you and the other colleagues during all these many years that I have served in the committee."

Partition, the only Way

After the failure of the Cripps Mission the morale of the people had gone down. Gandhi, as always, thought of something which would boost the morale of the people and grip them. When the Congress Working Committee met at Allahabad on 27th April Gandhi placed before them a resolution calling for the Britishers to quit India. Gandhiji's draft resolution was as follows :

“Whereas the British War Cabinet's proposals sponsored by Sir Stafford Cripps have shown up British imperialism in its nakedness as never before, the A.I.C.C. has come to the following conclusions :

“The A.I.C.C. is of opinion that Britain is incapable of defending India. It is natural that whatever she does is for her

own defence. There is an eternal conflict between Indian and British interests.

“Japan’s quarrel is not with India. She is warring against British Empire . . . If India were freed her first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan. The Congress is of opinion that if the British withdraw from India, India would be able to defend herself in the event of Japanese or any aggressor attacking India.

“The A.I.C.C. is, therefore, of opinion that the British should withdraw from India...

“The question of majority and minority is a creation of the British Government and would disappear on their withdrawal.

“This Committee desires to assure the Japanese Government and people that India bears no enmity either towards Japan or towards any other nation . . . Therefore the Committee hopes that Japan will not have any design on India. But if Japan attacks India and Britain makes no response to its appeal, the Committee would expect all those who look to Congress for guidance to offer complete non-violent non-co-operation to the Japanese forces . . .”

“The A.I.C.C. is of opinion that it is harmful to India’s interests and dangerous to the cause of India’s freedom to introduce foreign soldiers to India . . . It is a crying shame to bring foreign troops in spite of India’s inexhaustible man power . . .”

The opposition to the draft was led by Rajaji who said : “I do not agree that if Britain goes away India will have some scope for organizing itself . Japan will fill the vacuum created by the British withdrawal ... Do not run into the arms of Japan...” The resolution was passed on the midnight of 8th August, 1942, by the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay. The resolution sought the withdrawal of British rule from India as an urgent necessity both for India and for the success of the cause of United Kingdom. It appealed to the people of India “to face the danger and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian

freedom. They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committees can function. When this happens every man and woman, who is participating in this movement, must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India."

The Quit India resolution was warmly received by most of the nationalists. But Rajaji felt that, "the withdrawal of the Government without simultaneous replacement by another must involve the dissolution of the State and of the society itself. The first need was the Hindu-Muslim agreement as to a national government to take over the power. Without that the proposed campaign would only benefit the Japanese."

Gandhiji however felt that "It is fear of the Japanese that makes him tolerate the British rule. He would postpone the question of freedom until after the war. On the contrary. I say that if the war is to be decisively won, India must be freed to play her part today. I find no flaw in my position.

"I have arrived at it after considerable debating within myself. I am doing nothing in hurry or anger. There is not the slightest room in me for accommodating the Japanese. No, I am sure that India's independence is not only essential for India but for China and the allied cause."

When someone asked him what was the difference between his attitude and Rajaji's, Gandhiji replied, "I see the same difference between him and me that there is between chalk and cheese. He yields the right of secession now to buy unity in the hope of keeping away the Japanese. I consider the vivisection of India to be a sin. My statement amounts to the enunciation of the proposition that I cannot prevent my neighbour from committing a sin. Shri Rajagopalachari would be party in the sin, if the neighbour chooses to commit it. I cannot be party. What is more, I am firmly of the opinion that there is no unity whilst the third party is there to prevent it. It created the artificial division and it

keeps it up. In its presence, both the Hindus and the Muslims and for that matter all seemingly conflicting or disgruntled interests and elements will look to it for support and will get it. Their interest is greater than the independence of their country. No one need throw my other statement in my face, namely, that there is no independence without unity. I do not withdraw a word of it. It is an obvious truth. From its contemplation, I have discovered the formula of inviting the British power to withdraw. Their withdrawal does not by itself bring independence. It may induce unity or it may lead to chaos. There is also the risk of another power filling in the vacancy if it is there. If, however, the withdrawal is orderly and voluntary the British not only gain a moral height but secure the ungrudging friendship of a great nation. I wish all conflicting elements and interests will make a combined effort to rid India of the foreign domination. If they do not, any understanding with them will be like a house built on sand. The fear of the Japanese occupation of India has blinded Rajagopalachari to the obvious truth. Independence sheds all fear—fear of the Japanese, of anarchy, and of the wrath of the British lion.”

Gandhi did not agree with Rajaji that Congress should accept the creation of Pakistan. Speaking at the A.I.C.C. session on 8th August after his Quit India resolution was passed Gandhi said, “There is neither fair play nor justice in saying that the Congress must accept a thing, even if it does not believe in it and even if it goes counter to principles it holds dear.

“Rajaji said : ‘I do not believe in Pakistan. But the Mussalmans ask for it, Mr Jinnah asks for it, and it has become an obsession with them. Why not then say “yes” to them just now? The same Mr Jinnah will later on realize the disadvantages of Pakistan and will forgo the demand. I said : ‘It is not fair to accept as true a thing which I hold to be untrue and ask others to do so in the belief that the demand will not be pressed when the time comes for settling it finally. If I hold the demand to be just, I should concede it this very day. I should not agree to it merely in order to placate Jinnah Saheb. Many friends have come and asked me to agree to it for the time being to placate Mr Jinnah, disarm his suspicions and to see how he reacts to

it. But I cannot be party to a course of action with a false promise. At any rate, it is not my method."

A few hours after the resolution was passed the Government arrested all important leaders of the Congress. Gandhi was taken to Aga Khan's palace and Patel along with Nehru and others were locked in Ahmednagar Fort. The arrests of the leaders were followed by widespread disturbances. People had taken up the mission of "Do or Die" and many took part in the struggle - some non-violently, others violently. Government resorted to ruthless suppressive measure. Even according to their moderate estimate more than 1,000 people were killed and 3,000 seriously injured. For some time it seemed that the struggle would succeed. But because of lack of leadership, the struggle took various forms and died out.

On August 15, 1942, a week after his arrest, Mahadev Desai, private Secretary of Mahatma Gandhi, died in jail. Learning it people felt that the prisoners were being treated cruelly. In Chimur people took out a procession to protest against the arrest of leaders. The police attacked and fired on the procession. The people returned the attack and four Government servants were killed. On August 17 military was called in. It perpetrated great atrocities on the people of Chimur. The troops not only attacked and plundered the city but also molested and raped women—young and old—and imposed a punitive fine of Rs. 100,000. He was greatly perturbed by the terror reigning in the country and at the British Government's charge that he was responsible for violence. He entered into a long correspondence with the Government. The Viceroy held Gandhi and the Congress responsible for the outbursts of violence. According to Gandhiji it was the Government which had precipitated the crisis by arresting him and other leaders even before he had inaugurated the mass action.

Gandhiji refused to own responsibility and decided to fast for 21 days if the British Government failed to convince him of his errors or see reason and accept their responsibility. The authorities took this threat of Gandhi as blackmail to get out of the prison and decided not to release him. The Government wanted to stand firm and call Gandhiji's bluff. "To release

him", according to Lord Linlithgow, "would be a great tactical success for Gandhi, and for us a humiliating surrender. It would leave us in a much weaker position for rearresting him if he started to give trouble again, and we should be no further forward if he subsequently resorted to this weapon. And he is quite unpredictable ; whether released or not he is quite capable of fasting on any excuse that he thinks will be tactically sound." When all negotiations failed Gandhi started his fast on February 10, 1943. The Government, however, offered to release him for the duration of the fast. Gandhi refused to be released conditionally and wrote to the Government that he would fast as a prisoner.

Gandhi was very weak and it was doubtful if Gandhi would survive the ordeal. In fact Gandhi was on the verge of death and even sandalwood was arranged for his cremation in Aga Khan palace where earlier Kasturba and Mahadev Desai had been cremated. Rajaji rejoiced when he learnt that Gandhi had survived the ordeal.

This period in prison was more of a strain and tragedy for Gandhi. In December 1943, Kasturba fell ill and in February of the following year she, too, died.

Six weeks after Kasturba's death he had a severe attack of Malaria. On May 3, the doctor's bulletin described his general condition as "giving rise to anxiety." He was released unconditionally on May 6. For a long time after, he was so weak that to conserve his energy he was obliged to observe long periods of silence.

The British, though they had emerged from the war victorious, were physically exhausted and were unable to control the situation in India. Famines and disorders further affected the prestige of the British Empire. Meanwhile Lord Wavell, who had replaced Lord Linlithgow, was sympathetic to India and was reported to have said that he would "lead India a long way down the road towards Independence and freedom." His first step in this direction was the release of all political leaders.

Even when Gandhi and other Congress leaders were in jail, Rajaji, who had not been arrested because of his opposition to

Quit India, had been trying to bring about a rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim League for the solution of the political deadlock. Pyarelal has described these attempts in his book *The Last Phase* in the following words :

“An intellectual child of the Age of Reason with unbounded faith in his power of persuasion, Rajaji felt that if the Congress and the Muslim League could be brought together on a common platform, the battle of independence would be won in no time. He had further persuaded himself that if the Congress agreed to the right of self-determination for the Muslim-majority areas, as demanded by the Muslim League, the League would join hands with the Congress in demanding Indian independence and it would not then be possible for the British Power to refuse their joint demand.

“During Gandhiji’s fast in the Detention Camp, therefore, when the jail gates were temporarily forced open, Rajaji took the opportunity to put before him a formula for bringing about a settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League. The salient features of his formula, later known as the Rajaji formula, were : (1) The Muslim League should endorse the Indian demand for independence and co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a Provisional Interim Government for the transitional period ; (2) the Congress would agree after the termination of war to the appointment of Commission for demarcating contiguous districts in the North-West and North-East of India, wherein the Muslims were in absolute majority (3) in the areas thus demarcated a plebiscite of all the inhabitants held on the basis of adult franchise or some equivalent device would decide the issue of separation of India. If the majority decided in favour of forming a sovereign State separate from India, such decision should be given effect to (4) in the event of separation, mutual agreement would be entered into for safeguarding defence, commerce, communications, and other essential matters ; and finally (5) these terms would be binding only in case of transfer by Britain of full power and responsibility for the government of India.

“Gandhiji did not need a moment’s consideration to give his approval to it. Armed with his approval, Rajaji approached Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League.”

Pyarelal also mentions in his book *The Last Phase* the reasons which prompted Gandhi to renew Rajaji’s offer of Pakistan to Jinnah. He writes :

“How could Gandhi give his approval to the Rajaji formula and how dared he concede the principle of Pakistan? Had he not called the Partition proposal an untruth and India’s vivisection a sin? Some critics asked. Gandhiji explained that what he had agreed to was not different from the self-determination principle to which the Congress Working Committee was committed. It implied conceding the right to such areas as might want it, after ascertaining the wishes of the inhabitants of that area through a properly conducted plebiscite, consistently with the safety, integrity and economic progress of the country as a whole...

“The Rajaji formula conceded the essence of the League’s demand, in so far as it was reasonable, said Gandhiji. He did not mind if it was given the name of Paksitan . . .

“If the object was to create a unit where there would be the fullest scope for the development of Muslim religion and culture and for the expression of the talents and personality of the leaders of the Muslim community, without being overshadowed by more outstanding talent which they feared in Undivided India, his formula would give full satisfaction . . .

“He had the highest regard for Jinnah’s singlemindedness, his great ability and integrity which nothing could buy. Surely, Jinnah, the patriot, would not insist on freedom to engage in a fratricidal war . . . That is why he had knocked at his door, presented his cards to him for examination and entreated him to produce his without any mental reservation . . .” Gandhiji wrote in Gujarati on the 17th July, the following letter to Jinnah,

“Brother Jinnah,

There was a time when I was able to induce you to speak in mother-tongue. Today I venture to write to you in the

mother-tongue. I have already suggested a meeting between you and me in my invitation from jail. I have not yet written to you since my release. Today I feel prompted to do so. Let us meet whenever you wish. Do not regard me as an enemy of Islam or of Indian Muslims. I have always been a servant and friend to you and mankind. Do not disappoint me.

Your Brother,
Gandhi."

Jinnah promptly replied in English from Srinagar, in Kashmir, where he was recuperating his health. The letter ran as follows ;

"I shall be glad to receive you at my house in Bombay on my return, which will probably be about the middle of August. By that time I hope that you will have recuperated your health fully and will be returning to Bombay. I would like to say nothing more till we meet. I am very pleased to read in the Press that you are making very good progress, and I hope that you will soon be all right."

The Jinnah-Gandhi talks began in optimistic mood on 9th September 1944 and continued for 18 days but unfortunately broke down because Gandhi "maintained that at the first instance they should oust the third party with their joint action. When India has thus been made free from foreign domination, then by mutual settlement and agreement two separate States can be created in accordance with the desire expressed by the Muslim League in its Lahore resolution of 1940. Jinnah was not prepared to trust the words of Gandhiji or the Congress that they would give Pakistan after the British quitted India. He wanted his Pakistan immediately now, before the foreign rulers left India. He said separation must come first and then matters of common interest between the two states would be settled by a treaty."

Azad was against this Gandhi-Jinnah talks. He wrote in *India Wins Freedom* :

"I think Gandhiji's approach to Jinnah on this occasion was a great political blunder. It gave a new and added importance

to Mr Jinnah which he later exploited to the full . . . Mr Jinnah had lost much of his political importance after the rise of Congress in twenties. It was largely due to Gandhiji acts of commission and omission that Mr Jinnah regained his importance in Indian political life."

On September 28, 1944 Gandhi held a Press Conference and announced that the talks broke down but added that there was no cause for disappointment.

A Press Correspondent asked him if there was any difference between his present attitude towards the League the stand he took in 1942, Gandhi said :

"There is very great difference. In 1942, Rajaji had not 'burst' on the scene as he did at Aga Khan Palace with a concrete proposition. It reflects very great credit on his persistence. Rajaji never takes up a standpoint without the fullest consideration and having taken it up, he follows it to the bitterest end. He had abundant faith in my loyalty and he never gave me up as I have never given him up. When he found me in Aga Khan Palace and presented the formula, I did not take even five minutes and I said 'Yes', because I saw it in a concrete shape.

"My mind is narrow. I have not read much literature. I have not seen much of the world. I have concentrated upon certain things in life and beyond that I have no other interest. Therefore, I could not realize the meaning of Rajaji's stand and I disliked it. But when he came with a concrete formula. . . I myself a concrete being of flesh and blood. . .and when he had put something in concrete shape, I felt that I could hug it and touch it. Therefore, you see the vast difference between 1942 and today. However, thereby I have not departed from the Congress standpoint in general terms. The Congress has accepted self-determination, the Rajaji formula has also accepted the principle of self-determination and, therefore, the formula had become common ground."

Even after the failure of Gandhi Jinnah talks, Wavell continued his efforts for resolving the dead lock between the

Congress and the League. Wavell was a soldier and he felt that from the point of view of defence of India partition would be the most disastrous event. So in a speech before the Central Legislature Lord Wavell said :

“You cannot alter geography. From the point of view of defence, of relations to the outside world, of many internal and external economic problems, India is a natural unit. That two communities and even two nations can make arrangements to live together in spite of differing cultures of religions, history provides many examples.”

With this pious intention and with a view to create good political atmosphere Lord Wavell convened a conference of 21 leaders from all parties at Simla.

The Conference met at Simla on June, 25, 1945. Gandhi and Patel went to Simla but did not participate in the Conference. The Congress was represented by its President Maulana Azad. The Viceroy had envisaged an enlarged Executive Council which would be entirely Indian except for the Viceroy and the commander-in-chief. The Council was to include equal number of caste Hindus and Muslims. This council, in addition to look after the administration, was to make proposals for framing the new constitution. The Congress insisted that it represented all the Indians since it had a national character. It also insisted on the inclusion of a nationalist Muslim. But Jinnah asserted that he alone had the right to represent all the Muslim and hence all the five Muslims members of the new Council should be his men, i. e., members of the Muslim League. The Viceroy refused to oblige Jinnah and Jinnah refused to join the Council. Thereupon the Viceroy adjourned the conference to give the Congress and the League opportunity to come to a settlement by informal talk. Gandhiji and Jinnah had many rounds of talks but the talks failed and so this led to the failure of Simla Conference. At the last session of the Conference held on July 14, the Viceroy attributed the failure of the Conference to the Muslim League.

For some time at least the political horizon in India looked dismal but with the coming of Labour Government in power,

India's chance again brightened. It so happened that after the unconditional surrender of Germany on May 7, 1945, Churchill felt that if he ordered early elections he would be able to "cash in on his immense reputation as the architect of victory." But the results of the general election which were declared on July 26, 1945 announced the victory for Labour Party. Attlee became the new Prime Minister.

The Labour Government lost no time and on 19th September 1945 the Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that provincial autonomy would be restored to India after the elections, a Constituent Assembly would be set up as soon as possible to frame our future constitution and the Viceroy's Council would be reconstituted in consultation with the principal Indian parties. This announcement was joyously greeted and the people felt that for the first time Government meant business. Both the Congress and the League started campaigning for the ensuing elections.

A Cabinet Mission reached India on March 23, 1946 to discuss with Indian leaders the further shape of a free and united India. The Mission consulted 472 leaders of various parties and communities including the leaders of the Congress and the League. To resolve the congress-League differences a special conference was called in Simla in which representatives of both the parties participated. The Congress was opposed to partition and the League insisted on it. Faced with a deadlock the Cabinet Mission made its own proposals on May 16. It envisaged a threeter constitutional structure for India composed of the Union, the groups of States and the States. The Union had only limited powers and the States and the groups of States had the right of secession from the Union. The mission also accepted the demand for the formation of a Constituent Assembly by election of its members by the provincial Legislatures to draft a constitution for free India. It further advised the setting up of an Interim Government till the new constitution came into being.

The plan did not agree for the creation of Pakistan but still it appealed to the Muslim League for it provided for the States and the groups of States right of secession. And for that very

reason Sardar Patel called the plan cumbersome and was rather unhappy over it. But still the Congress accepted the plan. The League also accepted it but with reservation. When the time came for the formation of Interim Government, the Congress refused to concede the demand of the Muslims to nominate all the members. Jinnah had hoped that if the Congress refused to form a Government he would be called to do so. But Wavell saw no point in forming a Government without the Congress and he dropped the idea of the formation of Interim Government. This infuriated Jinnah. He accused the British Government and announced in a mood of frustration that "Today we bid good bye to constitutional method". He fixed August 16 as "Direct Action Day" and told his followers, "Today we have forged a pistol and are in a position to use it." In a Press conference he said that he was going to make trouble. When asked if that meant violence he declined to "discuss ethics".

The "Direct Action Day" in Bengal resulted in an orgy of bloodshed. The Muslim League continued to incite people to violence. The League supplied arms and weapons and serious riots broke out in Noakhali and Tipperah Districts on October 15. Plunder, destruction of property, murder and dishonouring of women were perpetrated on a large scale. Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam. The carnage continued for many days. The Government and its agencies—police and the army—rendered little help to the victims, and for the time the hooligans ruled and trampled law and order under foot. No accurate estimate of the losses could be made, but according to official accounts "five thousand lost their lives, and the devastation of property was enormous. The conversion of Hindus in large numbers and vile offences against women were perhaps the ugliest features of the East Bengal riots." This blood-shed was pure agony for Gandhi. He was then staying in the untouchables's quarters in Delhi from where day after day he raised his voice against violence. But his voice then seemed a voice in the wilderness.

Gandhi could no longer sit quiet. He was determined to teach the two communities to live and let live if necessary at the cost of his life. If he could not do that his message of non-violence had fallen on deaf ears. He felt that the freedom which India

was going to get was not the freedom which he had dreamt of. And so, he decided to undertake another march—this time to Noakhali in Bengal where the Muslim League government was in power. He decided to walk through the Noakhali and Tippera district, where murders had occurred, and see what he could do. On his way to Noakhali he learnt at Calcutta that the Hindus in Bihar had retaliated against the Muslims. The fanatic Hindus had proclaimed October 25 as "Noakhali Day" in revenge for the Muslim murders of Hindus in Noakhali. Over ten thousand people were killed in Bihar, mostly Muslims : thus each outrage brought forth a counter-outrage and each one worse than the other. Gandhi's sorrow knew no bound. He felt the reaction and retaliation of the Hindus—his co-religionists more acutely than he did of others. It was at Bihar that he had launched his first *satyagraha* in India. As penance, he resolved to keep himself "on the lowest diet possible". He threatened to fast unto death if "the erring Biharis" continued violence. But soon sanity dawned on the Biharis and Gandhi proceeded to Noakhali,

He was a lone pilgrimage determined to plant the message of love and courage in a wilderness of hatred and terror. In a region where 80 percent of the people were Muslims, most of whom hostile, Gandhi pitched his camp. He refused police protection and kept only one Bengali interpreter and one stenographer with him. At the age of seventy-seven, he went bare-footed from village to village, mostly on foot, preaching the same message of brotherhood, purity of heart and forgiveness. He said, "Everything I have to say is as old as the hills. In Bihar the Hindus were the wrongdoers and it was generally his way to be a little more severe with Hindus, his own people, than he ever was with Muslims. "I would forfeit my claim to being a Hindu," he said, "if I bolstered the wrongdoings of fellow-Hindus or of any other human being." There had been a massacre of the Hindus in Rawalpindi and in the Punjab. The Biharis' might have again lost their heads in a frenzy of retaliation, but Gandhi told them: "If ever you become mad again, you must destroy me first."

In May 1947, Gandhi had to proceed to Delhi to discuss with new Viceroy Lord Mountbatten about the transfer of power

to India. The new Viceroy advised the Congress leaders to accept Jinnah's insistent demand for the partition of India. The Congress leaders—Nehru, Rajaji and Patel agreed. Gandhi was against partition at any cost but he conceded to the right of these leaders to do so.

Meanwhile the country was aflame with fire of fanaticism. Murders, riots and rapes were the order of the day. There had been blood-bath in Calcutta. He reached Calcutta—six days before our freedom—in a bid to make Hindus and Muslims to befriend each other.

In High Offices

Rajaji had left the congress in 1942 when Gandhi gave call of "Quit India". Rajaji, though he had left the Congress, carried out his efforts which paved the way for our freedom. So when the time came for forming the Interim Government in 1946 Rajaji was invited to take the portfolio of Industries and Supplies. Many people resented it and said why should he be taken into the Cabinet and the Congress Working Committee. He had stayed out of the Congress during the crucial year of 1942 and had openly preached the policy of co-operation with the British. But Jawaharlal Nehru, who knew the intrinsic worth of Rajaji, insisted on his joining the cabinet and Rajaji obliged him.

Rajaji had the unique ability of resolving differences and for that reason, he was made the Governor of Bengal after independence where, because of the Hindu-Muslim tension, the situation was tense. Rajaji justified his choice and reduced the tension

between the two communities and won the hearts of the people by his simplicity, humility and integrity.

It is because of his popularity as Governor of Bengal that when Lord Mountbatten's term ended Rajaji was made the first Indian Governor-General. Even as Governor-General Rajaji continued to lead a simple life. K.P.S. Menon, who was the foreign Secretary when Rajaji was the Governor-General has written: "Those were the days when foreign Governments vied with one another to establish diplomatic relations, and exchange diplomatic missions, with newly independent India. It was my duty to accompany the new Ambassadors to Rajaji, assist at the presentation of their credentials to him and stay to lunch with him and his gracious daughter, Smt. Namagiri. All the heads of mission were not only impressed with but almost overcome by Rajaji's charm. This was all the more surprising, because his predecessor and the last British Governor-General of India, Lord Mountbatten, and his wife were known as perfect charmers; indeed they may be said to have charmed India into the acceptance of partition. Rajaji almost eclipsed them in the quality of grace.

"The secret of Rajaji's appeal was that he was entirely true to himself. The Governor Generalship sat lightly on his shoulders. The contrast between him and his diplomatic guests was startling. They would be dressed up in uniform, with gold braids, medals and decorations; and he would be in his *dhoti* and shirt, spotlessly white and clean. Rajaji, as it were, stripped the diplomatic guests of their uniform and saw right through them, without causing them the slightest embarrassment. He treated each of them not as His Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for X, Y, or Z, but simply as a human being. With his delightful impishness, combined with piercing acumen, he established a personal relationship with them. And they responded warmly to this treatment. They felt they were not in the presence of the Governor-General of India but a nice, wise old man who had somehow strayed into the Governor-General's throne.

"In his relations with the diplomatic corps Rajaji was very different from Rajen Babu, who succeeded him as Head of State.

Rajen Babu was frankly bored with diplomats and their chattering wives. Once, when the table plan of a luncheon at Rashtrapati Bhavan in honour of a new Ambassador was shown to Rajen Babu he noticed that the new Ambassador's wife had been placed next to him. "Must this woman be seated next to me?", asked Rajen Babu, "Can't Mrs Menon sit next to me?" It was explained to Rajen Babu that would be a serious breach of protocol and that the Ambassador's wife had precedence over all other guests. Unlike Rajen Babu, Rajaji revelled, or gave the appearance of revelling, in the company of diplomats and their womenfolk.

"Rajaji had a knack of gently pulling people's legs. When Garin, the new Portuguese Minister, was introduced to him, Rajaji greeted him by saying: 'You are the handmomest diplomat I have met. Isn't your wife jealous of you?' And whenever he was with him, he would say 'Here's the handsomest diplomat in Delhi:'

"As Governor-General, Rajaji made no distinction between the diplomats of countries with which we had close historical relations and of countries behind the so-called Iron Curtain. He went out of his way to cultivate Mr Novikov, the first Soviet Ambassador to India. He noticed that Mr Novikov was not present at the ceremony at which he was installed Governor-General of India in the presence of all other heads of missions. Novikov's absence was designed to show that the Soviet Government at that time laid no store by the replacement of a British by an Indian Governor-General and that they looked askance at India's decision to remain in the Commonwealth—an attitude which changed conspicuously a few years later, when the Soviet Government realized that India would not allow her membership of the Commonwealth to affect her freedom of action in any way.

"When Rajaji met Mr Novikov some days later he said casually: 'I did not see you at my installation ceremony'. Mr Novikov hummed and hawed and said: 'Oh; It was so hot (it was the month of June), too hot for me to put on my uniform'. 'That', said Rajaji, "is why you should dress in our climate as I do. Shall I send you a loin cloth and shirt?". I do not know

whether Rajaji sent these to Novikov, but he did send a piece of khaddar cloth to Brackenbery, his Chief Secretary, when he became the Prime Minister of Madras in 1937 and Brackenbery made a suit out of it and wore it with pride. Members of the ICS and other services, British as well as Indian, who had the privilege of serving under Rajaji had the highest admiration and respect for him."

When the new constitution was adopted on 26th January 1950 Rajendra Prasad became the first President of India and Rajaji relinquished the post of Governor-General. It may be mentioned that Nehru and Sardar Patel wanted Rajaji to continue as Head of the State for sometime and wrote to Rajendra Prasad to agree but Rajendra Prasad wrote to Nehru that it would be unfair to him to drop his name at that juncture. This letter clinched the issue.

Rajaji became a private citizen and left for Madras on January 27, 1950. From the plane he wrote a touching letter to Rajendra Prasad which ran: "My thought goes back naturally to you all whom I have left behind. There is an Almighty, vigilant, and kind power that has evolved all this beautiful and great world out of the primordial substance. May that Power bless you and our dear country and the men and women entrusted to your charge and that of your colleagues; may you find all the strength and the support you require !"

"I go with joy in my heart at the beautiful manner in which the little change-over has taken place. There was nothing to mar the beauty of it. God bless you all."

Rajaji had hardly settled in Madras when Nehru requested him again to come and join his Cabinet, as minister without portfolio. But soon Sardar Patel who was then the Home Minister, died and Rajaji had to take up his portfolio.

But Madras needed Rajaji once again. Nehru felt that Rajaji alone could save the situation and no one else could. Thus pressed Rajaji agreed to become the Chief Minister.

Sri Prakasa, the then Governor-General describes the situation in the state at that time. To quote him: "He was good

enough to take upon himself the burden of Chief Ministership at a very difficult moment while, to my embarrassment, I was the Governor of the State. The interview I had with him at which he was generous enough to allow me to nominate him a member of the Legislative Council, and then become the Chief Minister of the state, is perhaps the most important and unforgettable incident of my life; and how wonderful were those two years of stewardship of the State of Madras! He was able to quiet the communists ranged against him in the legislature by just one sentence: 'I am your enemy No. 1 and you are my enemy No. 1'. The Congress party under him which was a minority, soon became the majority; and the legislature easily gave a vote of confidence.

"It may perhaps be just as well to recall the atmosphere of that time. The members of the earlier Congress Government had all been defeated in the General Elections of 1952. They were asked to carry on till the new Government was formed. It was at this stage that I arrived in Madras. I visited the Secretariat. The defeated ministers were heart-broken, scarcely taking any interest in their work. The Secretaries had also almost downed their pens, all bemoaning the fate of their dear State, and fearing that all was lost. I myself felt most unhappy at the situation. When Rajaji took charge there was an electric charge in a moment. Everybody sat up and started working with full steam. There was no more any inefficiency. He chose a wonderful team of ministers all deeply devoted to their mission, and all was well with the state, the Government and its people."

"I for one can never forget those days; I shall ever remain grateful to Rajaji for the great personal kindness and affection he extended to me, and for all the encouragement and assistance he gave me in my own work. I fear I very often embarrassed him by my own rather childish ways and he was always reminding me that I must not forget that I was the Governor, and must behave with dignity and decorum—virtues which despite my advanced age of 77 I have not yet been able to imbibe, and which virtues Rajaji certainly possessed to the full."

Rajaji's first act as the Chief Minister of Madras was to decontrol food grains. In his broadcast he said, "I did not wish

to take the risks of premature publication of our ideas. I was afraid of the great monster greed whose shadow is upon our unfortunate society in all departments. I did not wish exploiters to take advantage of half baked proposals and ideas. Farmers and dealers, you will no longer be under harassing restrictions. May God protect us from greedy thoughts and ward off all ill luck from our path". Turning to the merchants he said: "Unwatched and unharassed by officials we should all endeavour to demonstrate that we can be honest and patriotic and God-fearing and prove ourselves worthy of the trust imposed on us. I have taken a great risk. I hope and trust you will not let me down". To the farmers he said: "Farmers, there is no need to hide and walk under cover as if you did not own what you possessed. You are free and can dispose as you choose of what is yours."

It hardly needs to be mentioned that decontrol was a great success.

Rajaji was very particular that appointments reserved for Castes and Tribes should go to them only. If there are no applications for the post, advertise again till you get a suitable candidate.

Rajaji had great regard for the independence of the judiciary. This is borne out by P.V. Rajamannar.

"When I was Chief Justice and he was Chief Minister our official relations were extremely cordial. I had the highest regard for him, and I believe he had faith in my integrity. Important questions like appointments of the High Court Bench were settled in a few minutes in my house over a cup of hot strong coffee. the only hot drink which he likes. When occasion demands Rajaji can be ruthless. He satisfies Gladstone's condition that the first essential for a Prime Minister is to be a good butcher."

During Rajaji's tenure as Chief Minister, an agitation was going on for the formation of Andhra State. Rajaji did not like the idea very much. The Central Government heeded to Rajaji's advice for some time but later had to yield to the demands of the Telgu speaking people and formed a new state.

Rajaji was a true friend of the poor. He wanted to help the handloom weavers who were living in abject poverty because of the competition from the mills. Rajaji campaigned for prohibiting mills to manufacture and saris. He said, "Giant competition in the shape of mill-made cloth has choked the handloom and, like an ungrateful child seeks to kill the mother. Our handloom weavers are the best craftsmen in the world. Buy handloom cloth and feed the families of the handloom weavers who follow an honest and noble profession."

Rajaji introduced another welfare legislation, i. e., Tanjore Tenants and Pannayals (Protection) Bill. He said, "Production cannot be improved unless you give the tiller of the soil sufficient interest in cultivation. I am not advising you to give away the land to the cultivators. It is to prevent such a calamity that I have brought in the Ordinance. If the tenants has a feeling that he will not be disturbed from his place for five years, he will put forth his best efforts and improve production. I can say you will find after four years, you yourself will want your tenant to remain permanently." To the tenants of Tanjore he said, "I shall visit you on the anniversary of the Ordinance and if you are able to show increased paddy it will be a happier welcome than the one you have accorded me today. I will also be happy to receive a garland of paddy straw instead of flower garland."

Rajaji had kept his cabinet well in hand. The general impression was that he dominated too much, but it was rather for the good of the administration. Ministers were expected to dispose of files promptly.

Ministers and the Members of the Legislative Council were instructed not to interfere in the day to day administration of the officers. He thus provided immunity to public servants from political interference.

Rajaji had to step down from the Chief Ministership of Madras on a question of reform in education in the lowest grade. Rajaji had introduced a radical change. He decided that the schools should work in two shifts to enable more students to get benefits of education. It was generally complained that our education produced men suitable for white collar jobs only.

Our schools did not teach any skill or crafts. Rajaji wanted the students to get instruction in the profession of the household to which the students belonged for half the day they spent at schools. There was a lot of agitation when Rajaji announced this change in the system of education. His opponents said that he was trying to discourage education among the non-Brahmin classes. The agitation against Rajaji continued and he had to step down and Kamaraj became the Chief Minister.

Satyam Eva Jayate

Once Rajaji was out of office, he devoted all his time for the betterment of his countrymen. He raised his voice against the certain policies of the Congress Government which he felt were not in keeping with the Gandhian principles. The last period of his life is generally known as the period of "*Satyam Eva Jayate*" during which he fought for the freedom of his countrymen in free India. Nehru was more inclined to Socialism. Rajaji did not like the Nehru's concept of socialistic pattern of Society. According to Rajaji it was a mockery of democracy. He reminded the people that Gandhi was in favour of minimum Government. Gandhi's definition of democracy was, "A nation that runs its affairs smoothly and efficiently without much state interference is truly democratic, where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic only by name." This was Rajaji's concept of democracy also.

Rajaji told the people that the price of liberty was eternal vigilance and it should be jealously guarded. He wrote in the *Illustrated Weekly* of August 14, 1960 that the "call of freedom is loud and insistent. The future depends on the response. When the battle for freedom was fought against Britain, we called for courage and the taking of risk and the response was such as brought success. In the battle for the freedom of the citizen, which is the true substance of the national freedom, there is the same call for courage and the taking of all the risk involved, and may it be that the response will be equally good."

Rajaji decried the Government policies of heavy taxations, controls, licences, permits. He said that the Congress Government had betrayed Gandhiji's faith in them. Rajaji used to pour out his mind through the columns of *Swarajya* which had become his mouth piece. In the 17th October 1963 issue of *Swarajya* he wrote :

"All things that Gandhiji wanted to be done are forgotten and the very opposite of what he wanted are being done. He desired to establish a society in which the people had the largest amount of freedom and the Government took minimum power for itself. The state of things now, as every one knows, is one of the rapidly shrinking freedom for the people and increasing power for the State. Gandhiji was against controls with which unfortunately we are now so familiar. The permit-license-raj is not disappearing but has come to invade our kitchens. Gandhiji wanted taxation to be low and simple in form but we have now crushing taxation, and new and yet newer imposts and levies. He wanted the State to be decentralized. But we have, instead, more and more centralization. The decentralization we are asked to accept as a great achievement, viz, Panchyat Raj turns out to be a gigantic fraud to get the Congress Party's work done at State expense by State organizations by the provincial ministries and panchayats. It is not decentralization but the octopus of the party spreading itself to live on State taxes and State power instead of its own popularity. Gandhiji wanted character, courage and integrity to be strengthened. But everything done by the Congress Party, using State power, tends to destroy courage and to extinguish integrity. Gandhiji sought to

spiritualize politics. His very entry into politics, he justified on that ground. But we see now, as a result of Congress rule for seventeen years, materialism is spreading and replacing the traditions and ideals of our nation. We see the people, under the pressure of the Government's exhibitionist plans and consequent unbearable taxation, growing more dishonest and unmanly. The elections, the expensiveness of which has become a vested interest of the rich Congress Party with its pistol-control over all the purses of the businessmen of the country, have become more and more bribe-riddled so much so that the people are losing faith in democracy itself. This Government must be changed if we do not wish utterly to dishonour the Father of the Nation."

Rajaji raised his voice when Congress Government wanted to erode the fundamental rights by passing the 24th Amendment Bill. He wrote in the *Swarajya* of 14th August 1971 :

"A massive majority of MPs in New Delhi has now resolved to destroy the fundamental rights which our freedom founders had thought was necessary for the welfare and freedom of our people. As *The Hindu* in the course of its leading editorial of 6 August 1971 said : 'The sweeping powers conferred on Parliament by the 24th Amendment to tamper with all the rights, including the right to freedom of speech, of freedom of association and of religion, are such that it is not surprising that some leaders of minorities and even some committee socialists have been alarmed over the grim possibilities.'"

Rajaji reminded the people that individual freedom is something which cannot be granted by the government but it is inherent in the people. In the *Swarajya* of 21st October 1961 he wrote:

"Freedom rests not on Constitutions but on the will of the people to be free. Freedom endures only in the measure and only so long, as this will lasts. Liberty is in the hearts of men and women. When it is not there, burning and alive, no Constitution, no law, no court can save it, as an American Judge put it."

Rajaji was firmly convinced that the need of the hour was a strong opposition. He told Monica Felton, the author of *I Meet Rajaji* that "A strong Opposition is essential for the health of democratic government. In a democracy based on universal suffrage, government of the majority without an effective opposition is like driving a donkey on whose back you put the whole load in one bundle. The two-party system steadies movement by putting a fairly equal load into each pannier. In the human body, two eyes and two ears enable a person to place the objects seen and heard. A single-party democracy soon loses its sense of proportion. It sees but cannot place things in perspective or apprehend all sides of a question. That is the position today "

For the growth of a true democracy the criticism offered by the Opposition parties was absolutely necessary. Rajaji said: "Democracy ceases to exist if there is no provision of either sort for free criticism of the policies of the government. Windows to let in air are wanted, not glass mirrors which reflect what is inside but which shut out ventilation. Parliament and State legislatures are there, but Parliaments in which opposition is over ruled by brute majorities are not enough and are no substitute for public criticism."

According to Rajaji in a true democracy, there was no room for violence. He wrote in the *Swarajya* of 10th February, 1968:

"Democracies may err but the way to correct errors in democracies is limited by the rule against violence, even if such limitation results in the long run continuance of error demanding patience such as is not easy. It is here that the Vedic motto on our national crest speaks in loud tones, Satyam eva Jayate. Do not rush to violence in despair and double the wrong but meet it by patience and sacrifice behind powerful argument. Peaceful resistance to authority always involves sacrifices."

With the aim of providing a strong opposition Rajaji founded the Swatantra party. He wrote in the *Swarajya* of July 25, 1959 about the aims and objects of his new party. To quote him: "The Swatantra Party stands for the protection of the individual citizen against the increasing trespasses of the State. It is an answer to the challenge of the so-called socialism of the Cong-

ress Party. It is founded on the conviction that social justice and welfare can be attained through the fostering of individual interest and individual enterprise in all fields better than through State ownership and government control. It is based on the truth that bureaucratic management leads to loss of incentive and waste of resources. When the State trespasses beyond what is legitimately within its province, it just hands over the management from those who are interested in frugal and efficient management to the bureaucracy which is untrained and uninterested except in its own survival.

“The Swatantra Party is founded on the claim that individual citizens should be free to hold their property and carry on their professions freely and through binding mutual agreements among themselves, and that the State should assist and encourage in every possible way the individual in this freedom, but not seek to replace him.

“The new party seeks to oppose the trend of the ruling Congress Party to adopt the ways and ideals of the communists in its eagerness to prevent the communists from going forward. The Swatantra Party believes that going over to the enemy is not defence, but surrender.

“The Swatantra Party, apart from the ideology here explained, hopes to furnish a real Opposition to the Congress Party so that parliamentary democracy may be properly balanced. The absence of a true Opposition has led to the rapid deterioration of democracy into a kind of totalitarianism. Voices have been heard from all quarters calling for a strong Opposition and the new party is supplying a felt want. This party of freedom is further making a novel experiment in restricting disciplinary control over party members to essential issues, giving freedom in all other matters to vote according to individual opinion. This is not mere strategy to ‘net in’ discordant, miscellaneous elements as at first might appear. It is really an answer to the constantly expressed sense of dissatisfaction with party rigidity, and to the complaint that it often amounts to suppression of opinion and rule by a minority in the name of a majority. A majority in the ruling caucus can always, under present conditions, impose its views on all and every issue in the Parliament of the nation. The

Swatantra Party intends to initiate a departure from the usual practice of political parties and, true to its name, give *Swatantra* or freedom to its members to vote according, to their own convictions (and conscience) on all but the party's fundamentals so that the decisions of Parliament may, on those issues, truly reflect the prevailing opinion, and not be just a replica of the majority opinion of the ruling party or the fads of the ruling clique."

Once Nehru complained that Rajaji was angry. Rajaji replied: "Mr Jawaharlal Nehru referred to me with respect and affection and expressed his wonder why I speak in so much anger. Let it be called anger, but can he not guess why I am angry? Does he not see how people who were on the whole honest and God-fearing have now been every-where made by the policies enforced by Government into a greedy and dishonest people? Does he not realize that a fine cadre of officials with a keen sense of justice, honesty and public service have now been made into spineless flatterers and partisans? I see fear enveloping everywhere like a poisonous fog on all the significant sections of the people. I see God disappearing and mammon occupying his place in the hearts of men. I see traditional values of life centering on compassion steadily being starved out by an all-devouring State.

"I can't help being sad. I am not entirely hopeless: so my grief looks like anger.

"The Swatantra Party may not be able to cure the harm already done, but much can be done by way of preventing further mischief."

The Prime Minister said with reference to the Swatantra Party:

"Mr Rajagopalachari has got a medley of companions in the Swatantra Party and it is difficult to know what their stand is. But broadly speaking, he stands for the perpetuation of the traditional system, leaving the industrialists to go ahead and do what they like. Ultimately they will change the system but on a different plane than I would like it to be. But I don't see how by means of that traditional system you can ever get rid of the problem of poverty. Therefore, I cannot imagine how any

person can base any approach on merely perpetuating the traditional structure.

To this Rajaji replied :

“If I have a medley of companions’ in the Swatantra Party, I believe it is not only natural but also fair. Our nation is a medley. No one can deny this or ignore the fact. It is not a good thing that this big country and this large nation should be governed by anything that approaches the homogeneity of a clique. I take the reproach of the new Party being a medley as a compliment. It will not do for a nation or a country such as ours which will not fit into any framework built on the models of British political history to trust in the uncontaminated homogeneity of a ruling party.

“Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, I fear, tries to find out our stand from the prejudices he has developed in respect of the various personalities who have publicly associated themselves with the Swatantra Party and he has not cared to study the principles accepted by the Party as constituting its stand. Our ‘stand’ is not to be guessed by psycho-analysis but is to be seen in the principles we have agreed to and set out for public information with more clarity and precision and with greater brevity than one can find in any of the Congress pronouncements or the Prime Minister’s speeches. If this procedure were followed, it could be seen that the Swatantra Party is not intending either to ‘perpetuate’ anything or leave the big industrialists ‘to do what they like.’”

Though Swatantra Party could not become an All India Party which could capture a large number of seats but still it could capture enough seats to serve the purpose for which it was formed. It proved to be an effective opposition party.

Rajaji was not against Hindi. In fact he had been a propagandist of Hindi during the freedom movement. But he was against the haste with which Hindi was being imposed. He was all for retaining English. He was not in favour of Hindi to replace English. He wrote in the *Swarajya* of 1st April 1967 that, “Unless we wish to hasten disintegration and become the laughing stock of the world, we must put the Hindi claim to

replace English in cold storage and meanwhile let the status quo be the rule. We can carry on as we carried on from 1947 to 1950 with the dignity and world respect which we then commanded."

Regarding the need for retaining English indefinitely he said: "I am one of the oldest now among those living who were in the fight for political emancipation. I have to be a rebel in the matter of language as I have been in the battle to recognize the natural laws of production of wealth and to give up the vain effort to ignore them. I have now to appeal to the University professors and the youth learning under them to revolt against what the politicians are seeking to do—to uproot the language of study, reference and instruction in modern enlightenment, viz, English which has rooted itself in the universities and to rely on a new mixed plantation which it is hoped will efficiently take its place. This is a war against reality, doomed to failure and disasters of great size. We cannot write off the history of two hundred years at the call of nostalgia or love of classic India. It was not merely a period of foreign rule. It was a period of great world changes, a period of new enlightenment, and technological progress alongside of foreign rule.

Rajaji condemned the manner in which the Congress government treated the Indian Princes regarding the payment of their privy purses. He was terribly against the deprivation of the privy purses of the princes by amending the Constitution. He said: "To repudiate one's own obligations after getting full performance from the other side, is disgraceful and unwise". He added "The immorality of the attempt to deceive the rulers who became Indian citizens and voters in the Union of India, on the basis of the assurances given and after the full performance by the rulers of their part of the contract, is something that cannot be described except by the strongest words of condemnation."

In 1962 Rajaji led a three member Mission for World Peace to the United States. The other two members were R.R. Diwakar and B. Shiva Rao.

In a letter to the *New York Times* Rajaji spelled out the object of his Mission. "I am in the United States as a member

of the Gandhi Peace Foundation Delegation that arrived in Washington on September 27, 1962 on a mission to try to secure the immediate cessation of nuclear tests. The present deadlock appears to be the result of the Soviet Government not accepting the offer of the U.S. Government to stop all tests in the atmosphere and the sea without any conditions, if the Soviet Government do the same. The Soviet Government has insisted that any agreement should cover also underground tests, over which there is an unresolved difficulty about verification and inspection. It will not consent to make a beginning with an agreed cessation of the tests over which there are no difficulties, as to verification and inspection. The position, therefore, is a needless stalemate in respect of even what could be immediately done to the great advantage of the health of humanity. I feel, under these circumstances, that the one way out of the stalemate is for the United States to take unilateral action, putting its offer into practice and promoting a prohibitory resolution in the UN for the cessation of all atmospheric and undersea tests and calling for a speedy and successful termination of the negotiations over the cessation of underground tests If it commands massive support in the UN, it is not likely that any member, however powerful, would violate its terms. In any event, I believe that the time has arrived when the moral sense of the peoples of the world should assume a dynamic form and compel the cessation of the continuous contamination of mankind's environment."

Rajaji made a deep impression on John F. Kennedy, the President of USA. B. Shiva Rao, a member of the Mission delegation, later recorded.

"In 1962, it was my privilege to accompany Rajaji to New York, Washington and London on a great mission, the suspension of nuclear tests as a preliminary to disarmament. I remember vividly, as though it was yesterday, one episode—our meeting with President Kennedy. We had been warned that it was very busy day for the President, and he could spare only 20 minutes. But Rajaji's presentation of the case was so convincing that Mr. Kennedy sat fascinated. The minutes sped well beyond an hour, but the President ignored his other engagements to listen to a deeply moving appeal by Rajaji on behalf of defenceless humanity.

"Finally, as the interview terminated, Mr Kennedy gave him the assurance that something would be done : and later he told one of his officials present at the interview that never before in his life had he felt the impact of ancient wisdom as he had done from Rajaji."

Before leading the Peace Mission Rajaji had delivered numerous speeches and written many articles advising the big powers to stop nuclear tests in the name of humanity. The Delhi Peace Council had brought out a book in 1957 entitled *Mankind Protests* containing a collection of Rajaji's speeches and writings on the subject of nuclear warfare. A Russian translation of this book appeared in Moscow in 1958. In 1960 National Book Trust had brought out a book *The Voice of the Uninvolved* containing Rajaji's speeches and statements on Atomic warfare and Test explosions. Rajaji felt that the great powers who had secured the secret of nuclear power and developed deadly weapons had no right to condemn unknown, unnamed and unborn children to mutilation, torture and death merely by experimenting with weapons for its own defence. This may even lead to the annihilation, He wrote in the Preface to *Mankind Protests*, "It is idle to expect the world to give up its opposition to present poisoning because the tests may lead to the evolution of more manageable nuclear weapons. Whether it be one big blast or one hundred smaller blasts, the nuclear programme is a delusion and a snare for everybody. Once the game starts, the frustrated party has no escape from using its power to strike effectively, and that means the last, or last but one step to annihilation."

Rajaji continued to guide his countrymen and the world at large through the columns of *Swarajya*. Ved Mehta gives a pen picture of Rajaji. Ved Mehta had gone to Madras to see Rajaji. Rajaji, it may be mentioned, was eighty eight years old at that time. Rajaji told Ved Mehta, "I am not so good in my ears and my eyes are also bad—I had cataract and I still have severe myopia. My sense of smell is good and my sense of touch is very good. But my digestion is very bad. I am an old man, and sometimes my health is not good, but I am a happy man. According to my own lights my mind is good, but the Congress

government in power in Delhi does not seem to think I am very clear-headed. All my life I have been engrossed in some kind of work. I have never required the usual tonic of recreation. Most of my work now is for *Swarajya*. Every week there is the front page article to write and my personal notes to the reader—the Dear Reader column; and sometimes there are other opinions and observations I want to write down for *Swarajya* readers, and so I contribute a third article. *Swarajya* has a circulation between fifteen and eighteen thousand, but it deserves to have a circulation of a hundred and fifty thousand.”

Rajaji fell ill in November 1972. He breathed his last on 25th December 1972. A few minutes before his death he asked his relatives who appeared to be sad and depressed, “Why are you doleful? I have not made an appointment with *Yama* yet.” When he asked him how he was, Rajaji replied, “I am happy.” I am happy were his last words. He of course was happy because he had played his part well but the humanity was sad over his demise.

Men of Letters

Rajaji and Gandhi both would have objected to the title since none of them was a professional writers. Both of them had written for the specific causes they were working for. And the causes were many ranging from freedom movement, on the political front and spread of khadi, removal of untouchability, prohibition on the social front. Authorship was forced on them.

The writings of Rajaji and Gandhi bear the authenticity of soul stamp. 'With Gandhiji and Rajaji the quality of their writing like the quality of their lives and ministry, derived from the secret reservoirs of their purified and sanctified self, and it did not very much matter what they wrote about for which forum — or in what genre or language. The soul stamp was unmistakably there, and that made it authentic currency.'

Rajaji has written on varied subjects and his writings reveal depth and scholarship. His style is simple and sublime. Had he devoted all his time and energies to writing books he would certainly have been the greatest world writers of our times. Even when he is forgotten as a statesman he will ever be remembered as a writer. The most important of his books are *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *The Kural*, *The Upanishads*, and *Bhaje Govindam* which he had rendered into English.

His *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* have run into many editions and have been translated into many languages of the world. In his introduction to *Mahabharata* Rajaji has written, "The realities of life are idealized by genius and given the form that makes drama, poetry or great prose. Since literature is closely related to life, so long as the human family is divided into nations, literature cannot escape the effects of such division. But the highest literature transcends such regionalism and through it, when we are properly attuned, we realise the essential oneness of the human family. The *Mahabharata* is of this class. It belongs to the world and not only to India. To the people of India, indeed, this epic has been an unfailing and perennial source of spiritual strength. Learnt at the mother's knee with reverence and love, it had inspired great men to heroic deeds as well as enabled the humble to face their trials with fortitude and faith. . . The *Mahabharata* is a noble poem possessing in a supreme degree the characteristics of a true epic, great and fateful movement, heroic characters and stately diction. The characters in the epic move with the vitality of real life. This is difficult to find anywhere such vivid portraiture on such an ample canvas."

Rajaji adds :

"The *Mahabharata* strengthens the soul and drives home—as nothing else does—the vanity of ambition and the futility of anger and hatred. One may tour all over India and see all things but one cannot understand India's way of life unless one has read the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, at least in a good translation... A word or phrase about Hanuman, Bhima, Arjuna, Bharata, Sita conveys to us in India, learned and illiterate alike, a significance all its own...In most Indian homes, children formerly learnt our

mythological stories as they learnt their mother tongue at the mother's knee ; and the sweetness and sorrows of Sita and Draupadi, the heroic fortitude of Rama, and the loving fidelity of Lakshmana and Hanuman become the stuff of their young philosophy of life."

Rajaji got the Sahitya Akedemi reward for his Tamil book on *Ramayana*. According to Rajaji the "best service" he had rendered to his people was the writing of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In the preface of the Fourth edition of the English version of the *Mahabharata* Rajaji wrote :

"These books of mine, have been widely read and enjoyed. They have helped the simple folk in the Tamil country to realize their higher selves. Naturally this has been a source of great joy to me in the evening of my life. It is good to be a political and national worker and to take office and work hard. But I have seen that it is better to be able to leave it and enjoy the company of the sages of our land and help them to speak to our men and women again".

The Kural, according to Rajaji is a great world classic. He wrote : Tiruvalluvar ranks with Confucius, Marcus Aurelius, and Buddha and others of that class. 'Tirukkural' or 'Kural' without the honorific prefix 'Tiru, is Tiruvalluvar's book. It is one of the oldest extant Tamil works. It is generally accepted as belonging to a period anterior to the second century A D. Some scholars place it in the first century B.C. Tiruvalluvar was one of those rare and great men whose catholic spirit rose above all denominations and religions, and whose vision was not clouded by dogma or prejudice of any kind. His approach to moral doctrine is marked by a very thorough knowledge of human psychology and a desire to help men with practical hints in the struggle against evil. Throughout his great work we can see how the poet and saint brings everything down to the level of practicality but without losing hold of the ideal. Tiruvalluvar like all other Indian saints did not believe that statecraft and *dharma* could be separated. The well-known doctrine handed down from the rishis is that *artha* and *kama* should ever be associated with *dharma*. If dissociated, the hunt for *artha* and *kama* would be sinful. And Tiruvalluvar was no dissenter from this

ancient doctrine. The characteristic beauty of Tiruvalluvar's style has been recognized by all Tamil authors and scholars as consisting in its precision and brevity of expression."

English reading people will ever remain in debt to Rajaji for revealing the rich treasure of Tiruvalluvar which till then only the Tamil knowing people could enjoy. In this respect he can be compared to Edward Fitzgerald who had translated *Omar Khayyam* from Persian into English. Not many had heard of this poem till then. But once translated into English it was "immediately hailed as a classic of world literature."

Rajaji's intellectual equipment which enabled him to produce such good literature was his vast reading. He had read the works of Francis Bacon, Francis Thompson, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Jane Austin, Dickens, Thackeray, Maxim Gorky, Anthony Trollope, Edmund Burke, Charles Lamb, George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Sir Isaac Newton, Julian Huxley. But his greatest regard is reserved for Shakespeare about whom he writes, "Every literary creation must be purposeful and this applies to fiction, the favourite form which present-day literature takes. Now there are critics who decry didacticism in stories: their objection is valid. But this does not rule out purposeful writing. What is objectionable didacticism and what is purposefulness which is good and necessary? There is in true literature both the elements of artistry and purpose. The purpose is not presented obtrusively in the form of polemics or direct preaching but is worked through characters into the plot and situations created by the artist. We see this most vividly in the plays of the most consummate of literary artists—Shakespeare. Every one of his plays—the great plays particularly—holds a supreme moral purpose. Yet, it is expressed through personalities and their actions, not through explicit preaching. We are gripped by the hand, so to speak, and taken through all the steps leading to crime or noble sacrifice. We are among men and women throbbing with life. New fiction can be of this type or be just moral disquisitions thinly covered by *dramatis personae*. This latter is not literature but mere propagandha. Who can object to the purposeful plays of Shakespeare, which we read without ever tiring and which certainly are true literature? Every one of

Dickens' stories or Thackeray's, too, can be put on the table, so to speak, and dissected and examined, and we shall find purpose running in them and moral and social objectives ; but the objectives are transmuted into literature and not presented as something not much removed from propaganda. These great writers did not write for amusement or excitement only, but for what they conceived to be a moral or social purpose. But they knew how to do it. They avoided didacticism and used the highest art of dramaturgy in their work."

Rajaji had drunk deep from the fountain of Bible and had great regard for the book. This was one of the few books which he had taken with him to jail during his first imprisonment, About Bible he has written :

"There are very few books that one really needs to read. If one has the Bible, it is enough. With the Old and the New Testaments we have the richness of two different civilizations. The Old Testament was all that the Jews needed, and they were really very much like us in their standards of conduct and in their custom and taboos. Of course, they were not vegetarians but their food habits were based, like ours, on principles of hygiene that still need to be observed in hot countries today if health is to be properly maintained. And they had the same respect for learning as we have, and similar standards of scholarship. I have always been sorry that I read the Bible too late for it to influence my style. I still like to read it from a text set out in the traditional way, in verses and in two columns."

Ra Narayana Iyengar narrates an incident which shows Rajaji's ability of spontaneous writting. He writes, "When I was in charge of the editorial section of *Jayabharti*, a quarter-anna tamil daily conducted by S. Venkatraman, former M. P., and for a long time manager of the TNCC, Rajaji one day came to the office in Din Roze Estate. During the conversation with Mr. Venkataraman he come to know that its financial condition was not sound.

Rajaji suggested that it be converted into a registered company, which was accepted. He gave latters to some of his

friends to contribute shares. On that day Rajaji had sent me and Venkataraman on some business. I had hoped to return in time to the office to write the editorial of the day. But I could not return in time. The foreman had gone to the editor's room where Rajaji was sitting. When he saw the foreman he asked him what he wanted. He simply said 'Editorial'. Rajaji began to write at once and gave the editorial within a few minutes. Thus the paper had the rare distinction of carrying an editorial written by one of the foremost leaders of New India".

Rajaji was a past master in painting pen pictures of some of his contemporaries Indians and foreigners. His estimation of some of our leaders including Gandhi, Nehru and Patel was superb. We have had glimpses of what he wrote about his Master, in the first chapter of this book. His obituary of Nehru is superb. He said, "Nehru was a world figure of whom India has every reason to be proud. The difference between him and Mahatma Gandhi was that while Gandhiji moulded history leaving the impress of his personality on the people and events of his time Nehru was a modern civilized citizen of exemplary culture. While Gandhi was a born rebel and questioner and was so even to the last minute when the assassin's bullets put an end to his life, Nehru's early moulding abroad by the ideals and forces around him explains all the policies which hold the present administration of India in its grip, which his weak successors have not the capacity to re-examine and revise or remould although they are as unsure of their being right as any critics sitting on the Opposition Benches. Often have I felt that it would have been easy to get Jawaharlal Nehru, had he been alive, to mend things but those now in charge of the affairs are afraid to think of any deviation. Much mending is however absolutely necessary; hence these thoughts during a 'sad week.'"

Rajaji was a man of God and he was attracted by God-Men. He wrote a book on Ramakrishna Pranhmasa and called it *Sri Ramakrishna Upanisad*. "It is no exaggeration to call Sri Ramakrishna's teachings an *Upanishad*. A sage like the *rishis* of old was born in our age. This was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He wrote no book; he made no speech. He

lived a true *sanyasi's* life and passed away. He used to talk to his disciples who sat and listened to him. His disciples wrote down the words of their Master. It is a record of his teachings. Learned men with a command of language can and write excellent essays and discourses. But these writings lack true life. Sri Ramakrishna was a Mahatma who saw God in his heart and in all things in the world outside. He saw Him in all things with the same certainty and strength of feeling with which we see each other. Such remarkable seers have sprung in different lands from time to time.

Rajaji paid a glowing tribute to Swami Vivekananda on the occasion of his birth centenary. He said, "Vivekanand's predecessors in the line of Indian patriots did great work but it was he who made us shed our inferiority complex. Reformers in all departments of life there were many but the nation suffered from basic weakness, a sense of inferiority, which it was necessary to cure ; and Swami Vivekananda did it in a most effective way. 'Know in what matter you are really great and strive to be yet greater in that way,' he said to India. That was his clarion call : 'Your greatness lies in the realization of your spirituality. Therein awaits true fulfilment on your own account as well as your place in the world.' To the Christian world he said : 'Do not look down Hinduism. It tells man that he is pure and sinless and can realize god hood if he shed delusion and weakness. There is no need to grieve or believe that we are born in sin.' Vivekananda put courage where there was fear, linked man to God, in a bond of confidence.' He swept away the doctrinal differences of philosophical schools and made *vedanta* into one proud and firm faith. He wanted spirituality to govern politics and every other effort. In that he anticipated Mahatma Gandhi. He did not want anyone to believe that Hinduism had to be mended in order to make it good enough. He saw it as a whole and claimed it was superbly true."

Rajaj has also received great acclaim as a short story writer.

Rajaji wielded his pen with equal grace both in English and Tamil. He had equal mastery of both the languages. But he was perhaps more at home in Tamil in certain fields—fiction narrative, exhortation and he found in English a readier and

more malleable tool in other field like intellectual debate, dialectical presentation, persuasive reasoning.

Rajaji had the knack of presenting the most abstruse philosophy of a difficult scientific theory in simple and lucid language intelligible to the average man. Rajaji had contributed an article to the Bhavan's Journal on Sir C. V. Raman and explained his Raman Effect, which had baffled the understanding of many scientists, into such simple language that a layman could understand it. Similarly he has explained the meaning of *Vedanta* in the book *Hinduism, Doctrine and Way of Life* in a very simple language.

To quote him, "The *Gita* which expands and explains the ethic of *Vedanta* emphasises that the activities of the world must go on. We should so act that thereby the world improves in the coming generations. The *Vedanta* ethic is not for the advancement of the individual but of the world as a whole, advancement in the best sense of the word. The world is peopled by ourselves reborn and so there is an intimate connection between our spiritual improvement and the future of the world. We leave conditions behind for posterity, not only in the environment, but according to the doctrine of rebirth we decide the character of the future population by our thoughts and acts. Like good people who plant trees for their children, we should work to improve humanity by improving ourselves for future births, even though there may be no continuity of memory and identity of personality. Otherwise, the world cannot become progressively better as we all desire it should.

"We have seen with our own eyes the progressive improvement of livestock and the health of men as a result of care and attention bestowed even in one generation. What we have seen in the physical world applies to the minds and souls of man also. If the postulates of *Vedanta* are accepted, the Vedantic ethic is spiritual eugenics. The object of right living to a *Vedantic* is two-fold : One's own true happiness and one's contribution to a better world irrespective of disconnection in memory when we are reborn. The appeal of *Vedanta* is based on a feeling of oneness with the world and responsibility for its future. Social and civic co-operation permanently benefits the

town or the village wherein one is a citizen ; patriotism benefits the future generations of the country to which one belongs ; *Vedanta* seeks the welfare of the future world of which we are the present builders. If we live detached and dedicated lives as *Vedanta* lays down, the world will be peopled by better men as time goes on. It is after all a comparatively selfish pleasure that would come of a memory of personality in rebirth. A soldier in the army does not wish to know the names and particulars of the people who will benefit by his bravery and death. The *Vedantin* is a citizen of the world and a soldier in the world's army in a totally non-martial but no less heroic war against evil, the more heroic since he seeks no personal reward."

Rajaji was convinced that there exists a close link between the writer and the people and both continually enrich and enforce each other. He wrote, "Rain falling from the heavens flows down to join the sea. Again from the sea the water is sucked up by the sun and rises to the sky, whence it descends again as rain and flows down as rivers. Even so, feelings and values rise from the people and touching the poets' hearts, are transformed into a poem which, in turn, enlightens and inspires the people.

Thus in every land the poets and their people continually reinforce each other."

Gandhi was a prolific writer. In the course of his life he wrote some 10 million words. His writings like his life, are devoid of artificialities. His style is simple, precise and clear. He never used flowery and ornamental language which would hide meaning. He had a knack for picking the most appropriate word to express his meaning. His utterances? went straight to the heart of the reader.

It may be mentioned that Indian writing in Gandhi's time tended to be laboured and pompous. Writers strove for ornamentness and artistry rather than clarity. Gandhi evolved his own style of writing both in English and Gujarati. He simply expressed what he felt and the words took good care of themselves.

"Gandhi had neither the time," remarks K. R. Srinivasa Ayengar, "nor the inclination to cultivate the so-called art of writing. No straining of emphasis, no colour, no radiating brilliance. Yet they are Gandhi's words and their very bareness constitutes their strength."

"Gandhi's literary achievement," writes John Hynes Holmes, "Is the more remarkable in view of the fact that he was never a literary man . . . Seldom, if ever, in his writings did he rise to the height of eloquence and beauty . . . Gandhi's interests were never aesthetic, but rather pragmatic. He had no desire, no ambition, no time to be an artist. So he wrote with disciplined simplicity, seeking only to make himself clearly understood. The result was the one most important quality of literary art—namely clarity. Gandhi mastered this medium. He wrote in a style which was perfect for this purpose of communication." And his purpose was to reach the hearts of the millions.

Yet there is grace in whatever he wrote. The reader often comes across memorable outbursts of lyrical feeling, as in his controversy with Tagore. In his best moments he was a master of prose because he combined feeling with argument and matched his mood to the moment.

Some of his editorials and articles had tremendous political influence and his journals had become very popular. In 1940, for example, *Harijan* was issued in a total of twelve editions in nine languages and in addition, Gandhi's most important articles were reprinted the next day in all the newspapers of India. In his last years his own writings appeared less frequently; in their place were summaries of his speeches and talks after prayers and descriptions of his activities.

Gandhi started writing in his early youth but Gandhi the writer grew up surprisingly fast a few years before his imprisonment in 1922. And it was not only because of his pen but also because of his personality that he could stir the Indian masses. Since he had identified himself completely with the masses he could understand and convey their innermost feelings. But he expressed their feelings in a sober and restrained manner. As he

himself writes, "The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise...in the choice of topics of my vocabulary. It is a training for me. It enables me to peep into myself and to make discoveries of my weakness. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression or my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds."

As in his character so in his writing, he would not tolerate any flaw. About his English Edmond Thomson says, "Perhaps his unsurpassed command of English idiom comes partly from his control over his mind. The hardest thing in our language for foreigner is in our preposition. I have never met an Indian who had mastered them as Gandhi has."

During his imprisonment of 1922 Gandhi read voraciously. He read, among others, Scotts, Ben Jonson, Goeth, H.G. Wells, Bernard Shaw and Kipling. He no doubt have continued his studies if he had not been prematurely released when he had served only two years out of the six years to which he was sentenced. But this period had prepared him enough to produce his *Autobiography*, a book that gained immense popularity for its chaste style and the honest confessions of its author. His *Autobiography* strips unabashedly each dark area in the author's life and reveals without any inhibition his failures and frailties and his struggle to reach the truth. In his book *Mahatma Gandhi*, H.S.L. Polak says "It ranks high among the world's great books written in prison. In the frankness of self-revelations, it recalls Rousseau's *Confessions*. In this book Gandhi will live for posterity as the noblest and the most honest character of our times." John Middleton Murry reviewing his *Hind Swaraj*, wrote, "The greatest Christian in the Modern World is Gandhi and *Hind Swaraj* is the greatest book that has been written in modern times."

Gandhi had the knack of selecting the most apt titles for his articles, "Tampering with Loyalty", "The Doctrine of the Sword", "Shaking the Manes", "A Confession of Faith", "One Step Enough For Me", "Turning the Searchlight Inward", "The Fiery Ordeal", have a rare evokative quality about them. The same thing can be said about the title of his *Autobiography*.

Gandhi was voluminous letter-writer and sometimes he wrote as many as 50 letters, in a day in long hand. He has written more than one lakh letters. He would write to people of all kinds—young and old, good and bad, great and humble, men and women and even to children. His letters whether they were long or short, official or personal, projected the multifaceted personality of the writer.

Gandhi believed in economy of words. He had trained himself for writing in a condensed form and because of this quality he was most in demand for drafting documents for the Congress. His manuscripts had few marks of corrections and seldom needed any change.

The bulk of his writings are to be found in the various journals which he edited—*Indian Opinion*, *Young India*, *Navajivan*, *Hindī Navajivan* and *Harijan*. Though today hundreds of books bear the authorship of Mahatma Gandhi, he himself wrote only a few books and pamphlets—*Satyagraha in South Africa*, *An Autobiography*, *Hind Swaraj* and *The Constructive Programme*. The material for other books has been culled by the editors from the various journals and papers. His writings are a record of his fads and fancies, his joys and sorrows, his ideas and ideals his principles and penances—in short his concern for mankind.

His writings bring out the evolution of the mind of the Mahatma and at the same time present an authentic historical record of contemporary events and Gandhi's own impact on those events. Though the writings deal with various subjects, practical or theoretical, they all reveal an earnest concern for mankind as a whole and for the destiny of man as man; a firm, unwavering faith in those spiritual and moral values which should govern both individual conduct and public life. The fruitful alliance between religion and practical politics, the constant dialogue which he encouraged between the sacred and the secular spheres of life, this was Gandhi's contribution to the process of human evolution, and this is well illustrated in some of his writings which have become classics already and which will be referred to and quoted by generations yet to come.

An important characteristic of Gandhi's writing is a close mixture of themes that are timely and those that are timeless. Whereas his writings on non-violence and truth are of universal application his writings on the Mill-hands' strike were topical and meant for the reader can enjoy that "timeless" quality, which marks all Gandhi's writings.

"We may sum up in the words of M.Chalapathi Rau, Gandhi was natural writer in Gujarati but he has a place as a writer in the English language. There was not only character but strength of personality in whatever he wrote. To read him was to learn how to use words correctly, with scrupulous regard for their exact meanings. He scorned ornamentation and avoided rhetorical devices. Yet there was eloquence in all that he wrote, compelling clarity and persuasiveness. There was something Biblical in the Solemn little sentences and those grave words which breathed and sang."

During the struggle for freedom movement in India in the twentieth century three people—Gandhi, Rajaji and Nehru had dominated the political scene of India. These three statesmen also happened to be great men of letters. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar compares Rajaji with Gandhi and Nehru. He writes: "Of his immediate contemporaries, he provokes comparison with Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji was bilingual or even trilingual, and for him too the management of words was but incidental to the management of men and affairs and the initiation and promotion of the peaceful revolution for the winning of *Swaraj* and the unfoldment of *Sarvodaya*. Although with Nehru, as with Gandhiji and Rajaji, authorship was forced by the exigencies of the revolution prolonged periods of prison-life for example—he was rather more of deliberate writer than the other two. And while Nehru reaches now and then, in his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech, for example, or the obituary reference in Parliament to Gandhiji's martyrdom, it is Gandhiji and Rajaji who maintain a more consistently uniform level of crystal clarity and sufficiency in their writings. Again, of the three, while Rajaji shares with Gandhiji his etheric moral tone and Messianic earnestness, he shares with Nehru his global humanistic culture, his wide ranging scholarship and his feeling for the unexpected.

It is also no more than a statement of fact to say that Rajaji's was the more versatile poet, or his canon is encyclopaedia in subject-matter and includes most of the contemporary literary genres. We have, perhaps, to wait for the collection and publication of his tens of thousands of letters for anything like a proper appraisal of his vigorous and vivacious mind and his unfailing heart-warming sensibility."

Lighter Moments

Of the many qualities which Rajaji and Gandhi possessed, the dominating one was their subtle sense of humour. Their humour was pleasant, enjoyable elegant, though at times caustic and ironical. Often Rajaji's comments were piercingly forthright. His answers were not so simple as they sounded. The ingredients of his humour also varied vastly. Sometimes his humour sparkled, and at times his wit devastated. This is borne out by several anecdotes told by his friends, journalists, authors who have written books on him especially by Bimlesh Chatterjee who was Rajaji's Military Secretary when Rajaji was the Governor of West Bengal and later when he became the Governor-General of India and who has written a very absorbing and interesting book on him—*Thousand Days with Rajaji* and Monica Felton, author of *I Meet Rajaji*.

When Rajaji was the Governor of West Bengal, he once visited a hospital. At a certain place on the path, there was an open drain in front ! Seeing it, Rajaji asked, "Why has it been

kept uncovered ? Surely not on hygienic necessity or to carry out some research on sanitation ? I can also see a sweeper's broom on the staircase. Is that kept here to adorn the place ?”

He continued, “Some parts of the coconut tree, such as the fruits and leaves, are used as decorations at welcomes. But this is a new experience to see the leaves' ribs (the broom) used to welcome someone.”

Rajaji could make a pun on himself. Once talking about his dark glasses he said, “With my rectifying glasses I can see things which are there. but some of my critics say that with my dark glasses I can see even things which are not there !”

Rajaji once visited a Zoological Garden. When his car drew up at the main gate of the Zoo, the authorities were all waiting there to receive him. Rajaji cryptically said “Why have you all taken the trouble to come here ? I have come only to meet the poor creatures who are kept confined here for no fault of theirs.” In the zoo he saw a hippopotamus all alone in a muddy ditch. Rajaji remarked, “What a magnificent specimen of God's creation ! I see, it is a male. But is it a bachelor or a widower ?”

When he learnt that its mate had died only recently, Rajaji observed, “That is cruel ! Restricted to this artificial home, he should have been given another bride.”

A lady visitor to the Governor's house asked Rajaji pointing towards an ancient gun mounted on a platform; “Why don't you get those relics removed ? In the changed order of things they seem to be quite out of place here.” The Governor replied, “I am only a non-paying tenant in this House. Those who now control these properties may not perhaps like to dismantle the signposts of history with the sweep of a pen. You do not seem to be satisfied with the restoration of the country's independence. You should allow some time for the scabs and scales of the old disease to fall off. If you know the disease is cured, why get impatient with those little ugly scars ?”

Once Rajaji asked Gandhiji, why he did not care to stay with him at the Governor's House. “That house is much too big for me.” replied Gandhiji.

Mr. Suhrawardy, who was sitting near by said, "The Mahatma likes to live with the people. He has no fascination for palaces."

"That was why he was put up in the Aga Khan's palace !" twitted Rajaji.

Once Rajaji went to see Gandhiji and found that his camp was surrounded by a huge crowd of people, blocking the approaches, and also some policemen. Rajaji remarked, "poor Mahatma ! A prisoner in freedom. Worse than me !"

Once Rajaji had gone to see a football match. During the game's interval a number of people came forward to have a closer look at him. Looking at them, Rajaji said, "They have all come to see the non-playing star."

Once Rajaji visited a residential school. He also visited its sick-room. He asked the sister-in-charge of the sick-room what were the illnesses that the boys usually suffered from. He was told that the common ailments were cough, cold, cuts, sprains and minor injuries. Out of politeness the Rector asked Rajaji to suggest a way to reduce the incidence of these ailments. Rajaji said, "I shan't give out the solution, for that would be interfering with professional matters. But if you want me to drop a hint then I would say that the sister should lose some of her attractiveness."

Rajaji accompanied by the Rector went to have tea with the Rector and his wife. At the cottage Rajaji was conducted to a cosy room where a strong woodfire was blazing.

"Very good," exclaimed Rajaji, "this is not going to be a cold reception ?"

When the Rector said that the fire was his wife's idea, Rajaji remarked, "As may be expected of the Rector of a Rector !" When he saw too many eatables—pastries, biscuits, sandwiches, fruits and nuts, spread around him on small tables he said, "You make me uncharitably prominent with this enormous collection of food. This must be your idea. The Rector unrectified !"

Rajaji once visited a dairy and was requested to taste a glass of it. Rajaji thanked them and said, "I have had enough calories for the day. Better give my share to some deserving person, and if here is no such person in this group, then give it to a calf whose mother is drying up."

Once Monica Felton, author of *I Meet Rajaji*, was sitting with C.R., when two Americans, Molly and Richard, came to see him. They had come to India on a holiday. He asked them : "Have you seen Mahabalipuram ?"

"Yes, we were there yesterday."

"And, I suppose," Rajaji said, "that you were told these are two historic relics in Madras that every tourist should see and that you ought not miss the ancient monument in this house either ?"

Once Rajaji met Mrs. Naidu after the stormy session of the AICC which discussed the question of removal of Netaji Subhas Bose from the Presidentship of the Congress. It may be remembered that Subhas Bose had won in the face of opposition from Gandhiji and defeated his opponent, Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, was a strong, staunch critic of Netaji and she had vehemently lashed out at Bose, forcing him to accept the leadership of Gandhi. Rajaji complimented Mrs Naidu on this "You performed today as Mrs Herculean task."

When Rajaji was Premier of Madras, he wanted to bring in some measure to reduce the indebtedness of the masses and to free them from the clutches of moneylenders. During a discussion in the State Legislature, an opposition member advised Rajaji to collect statistics of indebtedness of the masses before bringing in his proposed Bill. Rajaji replied : "If my friend troubled by mosquitoes, wants to go in for a mosquito-curtain, he will certainly not take a census of mosquitoes and their proportion of distribution between Mylapore and George Town."

While inaugurating the Swatantra Party formally at a function in Bombay in August 1959, Rajaji invoked the blessings of God at the end of his speech. A few days later, at a press conference, Nehru remarked : "They have even made God a

senior partner of the Party. They are here, not dealing with politics and economics, but with stratosphere, with the Almighty presiding over their destinies." To this Rajaji retorted : "As for his taunts about partnership with God, the Prime Minister has stumbled on the cardinal religious doctrine of the Divine presence in trying to mock at us."

When Rajaji was the Home Minister, he was in favour of accepting some recommendations presented before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Central Cabinet. These were not liked by Nehru and some other members of the Committee. Rajaji pleaded in vain for the acceptance of the recommendations. When he concluded, Nehru observed, in a lighter vein : "You see, Rajaji, the majority is with me." Rajaji grinned and said : "Yes, Jawaharlal, the majority is with you, but logic is with me."

Once Rajaji was travelling with an Englishman by train on a very hot day. The Englishman told Rajaji : "It's a very hot afternoon."

"Not hot enough," replied Rajaji.

"Not hot enough ? What do you mean ?" the Englishman asked, with a slight edge to his voice.

"Not hot enough," said Rajaji smiling, "to keep you gentlemen out of our country."

Rajaji once visited a piggery and asked if the pigs were artificially fed or allowed a free feed of their choice in the open.

"They are all cereal-fed," answered the Manager, "and their movements are absolutely restricted. They of course sun in the open under supervision."

"Then they will have a sympathetic visitor in me," said Rajaji.

On a chilly afternoon Rajaji once journeyed a long way on a hill-station, to visit a well-known 'Home' established by a reputed Scottish missionary. Receiving him the head of the institution enquired whether the drive had been comfortable.

"The warmth of your reception, I am sure," observed Rajaji, "will take away the chill of the evening."

Rajaji once saw a flock of sheep bringing down big bundles of wool on their back. He said, "This is sheer mockery! I suppose each of those innocent creatures is carrying its own sheared wool."

Sometimes Rajaji reacted sharply to flattery. At a party, a guest said, "We are lucky in having a politician of your calibre as the Governor of this Province." Rajaji retorted, "I can assure you that I have not so far done anything which should make you feel happy. If you say that in appreciation of my past performances, then obviously you are exaggerating. And if you say that to flatter me, then you are only deceiving yourself." When he was told that the gentleman must be feeling hurt, he said "Did I drop a brick?"

During the Second World War, there was the threat of a Japanese attack and it was rumoured that Madras would be evacuated. Many senior British officials, with their families, sought the safety of the hills. This provoked Rajaji. He twitted: "Are the King and the Queen and members of the British Cabinet running away from London with only 20 miles of the English Channel separating them from the marching hordes of Hitler?"

His humour helped him to face hostile mobs. Rajaji had gone to Bombay to attend the AICC Session held there on August 8-9, 1942, to discuss and decide on Gandhiji's Quit India call. Once in a meeting at Bombay he was greeted by cat calls and shouts of "Rajaji go back". Not only this, a demonstrator hurled at him, with unerring aim, a tar-filled paperball. The ball burst, smearing Rajaji's face with tar. It trickled down and doused his khadi clothes too.

Rajaji unmoved went to the dias and said: "Friends, let us, first of all, congratulate the young man who threw tar at me with such perfect aim. He disagrees with me. Endowed with courage of conviction, he naturally wanted to give expression to it. Today, India surely needs more such bold young men with grit and determination."

At another occasion when a stone thrown by some miscreant missed him, Rajaji said, "I know that the young man who was throwing stones cannot aim properly. If he is a good marksman, he could have found a place in the police department and risen very high."

Sir T. Vijayaraghavachari, one of Rajaji's dear friends sometimes pulled the legs of Rajaji. Once he told Bimlesh Chatterjee, Rajaji's Military Secretary in Rajaji's presence, "I am glad you are surviving my friend's contact. He is known to be an exacting taskmaster but what is bewildering about him is that, acting as an Alternating Current he attracts one by his sincerity and humour, but at the next moment he repels you by his taciturnity and abrupt ways. So, with him one does not really know whether one is coming or going. You seem to have got steady in his sphere." There was no sign of irritation on Rajaji's face. He simply said, "Don't be childish."

Once Sir T. Vijayaraghavachari told Rajaji that his memory was failing him.

"Let me finish," retorted Rajaji. "Memory is not absolutely essential in the office of the Governor-General. The Prime Minister serves me as my brain."

Rajaji seemed to enjoy his friend's rattle. He looked intensely amused when Sir T.V. Bimlesh Chatterjee asked if he knew what the letter "C" in the Governor-General's initials stood for. Before he could say "Chakravarti", Rajaji broke into laughter and said, "Childish"

"You see, our Governor-General is trying to confuse us," intervened Sir T.V. "It is neither Childish, nor Charming. It could be Clever, but many of his friends say that the 'C' stands for Cynic."

Passing by an ancient gun mounted on a platform, Rajaji said, "I prayerfully wish that all these monuments of might, these symbols of destruction, could be put up in some less conspicuous place. And if they must adorn the residences of the Governors

then their barrels could be pointed towards the House and not towards the people.”

A gentleman remarked from the rear, “That is very true, Your Excellency. These guns are incompatible with the philosophy of non-violence.

Hardly had he completed his sentence, Rajaji snapped back, “A country cannot be governed by the weapons of non-violence if the people continue to carry their aggressiveness of mind. Leave aside the Defence Services and the Police, as long as young volunteers feel the need of sticks to control a crowd, I tell you, we will not be deemed to have developed that sense of orderliness which is implicit in *ahimsa*.

Pointing his stick at an orderly who was trying to push his way about, Rajaji said, causing a burst of laughter, “There you see violence in its simple physical form, and I am sure you will not be surprised if I say that this guilty person serves me my daily food.”

Rajaji was coming to Delhi by air, as the aircraft was approaching Delhi, a dust storm had just swept over Palam airport. The co-pilot informed him that the arrangements for the VIP reception at the airport had to be freshly drawn up as they had been badly dislocated by the dust winds.

The word VIP set off a humorous interlude, Rajaji said with an innocent look, “The trouble is that I am only a Very Innocent Person ” Not familiar with Rajaji’s ways, the Squadron Leader said, “But sir, this a VIP aircraft.”

Rajaji added, “I see, the *vahan* (carrier) is mightier than the god. No wonder the peripatetic bulls of Calcutta or elsewhere receive such attention and adoration from the public, when the countless Siva temples continue to decay for want of minimum attention.”

Profulla Chandra Ghosh, former Chief Minister of West Bengal has narrated an interesting incident depicting Rajaji’s sense of humour. He along with Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray

was proceeding to Kakinada to attend the Congress Session. When they boarded the train at Bezwada for their journey to Kakinada, Rajaji was the lone passenger in the compartment. On spotting him out, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray turned to his companion and said : "Frail, fragile frame." Immediately Rajaji said : "Leading to the fourth F—failure."

According to Horace Alexander "Rajaji kept throughout his life that sense of proportion that we call a sense of humour. How he enjoyed that fine gold-headed stick that was, in a sense, his staff of office! One day he observed, with his usual twinkle, that one great advantage of his position was that he always saw people dressed in their best clothes."

Rajaji complimented the people of Madras for their sense of humour. He said, ' They possess the sense of humour, which is the highest philosophy. Let it not be given up. Humour is the highest philosophy *Vedanta* may discover."

It was Rajaji's firm conviction' that love was above looks. He said: "Dr. Johnson's wife was a very plain woman and many years older than he was, yet he loved her very much. The idea of saying that love is based on appearances is like saying : Let me see what you look like when you go into the bathroom."

Rajaji was against caste, creed and communal feelings. When correspondent asked him what his *gotra* was, he replied, "I'm of the Srivatva *gotra*, but neither my intellect nor my folly is traceable to it."

Rajaji was a staunch supporter of removal of untouchability. At an A.I.C.C. Session someone asked him : "Must we touch every scavenger in filthy clothes ? Would you do it yourself?" Rajaji replied : "I would not mind touching even you, my friend. But that does not mean that I must stop to touch every scavenger that passes by."

Shri Pyarelal who was Gandhiji's Private Secretary has also narrated an anecdote which shows Rajaji's wit. He states : "Once I had an exquisite experience. He had mentioned to me a very long South Indian name with three letter initials, indicating

the place of birth, father's name, caste, etc. of the person concerned as it is common in the South e.g. K.A.S. Subramaniam (Kaveripathnam Appaswamy Shankara Subramaniam). "Let me call a stenographer." I quipped as he began to spell it out in full. Ignoring my remark, he quietly changed the topic. After a little while, he asked innocently : "What's Hakim Sahib's name?"

"Hakim Ajmal Khan," I replied. "Why, what's the matter?"

"No," he persisted, "How do they refer to him at a public meeting."

It was customary in those early Non-co-operation days in the Punjab to confer elaborate honourific titles on national leaders. Hakim Ajmal Khan had been exalted as a Masih-ul-Mulk, Hazal-u-Hakim, Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb. The moment I began, Rajaji sprang to the kill for which he had been long waiting. "Stop, let me call a stenographer." he cut in with a grin and a twinkle.

Rajaji, as Governor and later as Governor General, had to throw numerous parties. Sometimes it became difficult to cater to the tastes of hundreds of guests. Once a guest had asked for a glass of milk at the end of his dinner, as he was accustomed to that habit. Rajaji asked, "Is he hoping to be provided with a bed after dinner also?" Once a guest had enquired from an attendant whether pure ghee or vegetable fat was used for a particular preparation. Learning this, Rajaji wanted to know whether the guest had enquired if the ghee was made from home-made butter, and whether the butter was extracted from the milk of a black cow.

As the Governor-General was getting up, a guest noticed a couple of crows hopping around in search of food crumbs and said, "Aren't they cunning ! How they look through one eye and hop sideways cautiously to get at the food !" "That is not the characteristic of crows only," admonished Rajaji. "You see it in the human fraternity also, not for tit-bits, but for good bits !"

Dr. B.C. Roy, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, was being escorted across the Gardens of the Rashtrapathi Bhavan. The Chief Minister looked around and in his usual fullthroated voice asked, "What is this ? A garden or a cemetery ?" Seeing Rajaji aparoaching, Dr. Roy said "Rajaji, I had not seen this garden closely. Its lay-out seems very much like that of a well-kept cemetery."

"Now, don't tell that to anybody else," said Rajaji. "There are talks going on about converting this place to one thing or the other. Your suggestion, though nice, would add to the prevailing confusion."

Dr. Roy asked him if he was really relinquishing his office of Governor-General.

"The office itself is getting liquidated," said Rajaji. "So there is no way out but to relinquish."

"But your services cannot be dispensed with, now," said Dr. Roy. "I am sure they are not going to put you in the cupboard."

"I am ignorant about the technicalities of a dispensary," remarked Rajaji. On the question of dispensary, therefore, they might perhaps consult my distinguished doctor friend. I only hope that the cupboard in which they place me would not be labelled, "Poison".

Once the Governor-General went to see one of his relatives in a private car. On his return his car was stopped at the gate. The armed guard at the gate did not allow the Governor-General's car to enter. The plainclothed ADC told the sentry that the car was carrying the Governor-General ; but he continued to challenge the car with his fixed bayonet. One of the guards repeatedly flashed his torchlight at Rajaji in an attempt to identify him, while Rajaji calmly reclined in the corner of the rear seat till the security officer reached the scene and recognized t he Governor-General and opened the gate.

On this incident Rajaji only commented : "Those poor fellows only trying to be extra-cautious in discharging their duties. I should have used a Government House car. However the drama was not altogether uninteresting, except for the fact that a silly man was trying to dramatise the scene all the more by playing his powerful spotlight on my eyes,"

At a luncheon party one of the guests asked Rajaji if he did not feel tired flying long distances. Rajaji's immediate reply was, "Not so much as I do replying to short question."

Once Rajaji was conducting a meeting. An officer, who was missing his tabacoo very badly, asked for Rajaji's permission to smoke. Rajaji told him, "Yes, yes, you have my permission to smoke. Anyway the deliberation of this meeting are going to end in smoke."

Like Rajaji, Gandhi too is known for his wit and humour. Once when Gandhi was asked "Do you think a sense of humour is necessary in life", he replied : "If I had no sense of humour, I should have long ago committed suicide".

Those who came in closest touch with Gandhi are most eloquent in praise of his sense of humour. Devdas Gandhi, his youngest son, said, "Of all memories of Bapu, there is none so abiding as his hearty laugh. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his *autobiography* that nobody knew Gandhi who had not known his laughter. "His smile delightful, his laughter infectious and he radiates light heartedness."

Louis Fischer has observed : "Gandhiji's laughter was physical and mental; it was amusement plus agreement or at least amusement plus tolerance. It was the laughter of a man who was not afraid to be caught with his visor up and his guard down."

"If I had no sense of humour", Gandhi once wrote, "the attacks I have had to face would have killed me long ago...I do not care what people say about me. I take lightly and can laugh even with those who laugh at me. This is what keeps me going."

There are several anecdotes which illustrate how natural and spontaneous his sense of humour was.

During his visit to London, Gandhi met a sailor and asked him : "How many children have you ?" "Eight, Sir, four sons and four daughters" was the reply. "I have four sons", said Gandhiji "so I can race with you half way."

Once a woman visitor, Mrs Miles, asked Gandhiji "Do you suffer from nerves ?" "Ask Mrs Gandhi", straight came the reply, "she will tell you that I am on my best behaviour with the world but not with her." "Well my husband is on his best behaviour with me." said Mrs. Miles. "Then", retorted Gandhi, "I am sure Mr Miles has bribed you heavily."

Asked why he was uncharitable to those who drank Gandhi replied, "Because I am charitable to those who suffer from the effects of the curse."

Once he asked a lady what her honorary degree of D.D. meant. She explained that was a Doctor of Divinity. "So you know all about divinity", commented Gandhi.

While Gandhi was in London in 1931, Ramsay MacDonald, the then British Premier, arrived for an urgent consultation with Gandhi. At the same time a London Postman who had walked miles was also waiting outside to see Gandhi. Gandhi chose to see the postman first saying, "I will see that man of letters first. A statesman can wait, for that is his job. He is always waiting for circumstances to force him to move."

A British Journalist asked Gandhi shortly before his death, "Have you anything for me, Mr. Gandhi ?" "Not unless you want my shawl," was the reply.

Invited to a party by King George V, then Emperor of India, Gandhi had gone to the palace in his usual loin cloth. A journalist asked him how he had felt about it. Gandhi observed "His majesty had on his body clothes enough for both of us."

When a French journalist asked Gandhi if he would traverse the streets of London in his loin cloth, Gandhi answered with a twinkle in his eyes, 'You, in your country, wear plus fours, I prefer minus four.'

He made the following declaration to the custom officer in 1931, "I am a poor mendicant. My earthly possessions consist of a spinning wheel, prison dishes, a can of goat's milk, six homespun loin cloths and towels, and my reputation which cannot be worth much."

Gandhi had the capacity to laugh at himself. Once he saw his cartoon and remarked, "It is good, but why has he drawn my ears so long?" "Because your ears are so", was the reply. Gandhi smilingly said, "I never look into the mirror. Therefore I do not know if my ears are so long," Asked why he did not use a mirror, he replied, "Since everyone who meets me sees my face, what need is there for me to employ a mirror?"

Once Louis Fischer, the American Journalist, was interviewing Gandhi when two more Americans came to interview him. Gandhi told them, "One American has been vivisectioning me. Now I am at your disposal."

When an author requested Gandhi to page through his books, some one asked what paging through meant. "It means", replied Gandhiji, "looking first at the last page, then at the first page, then a page in the middle". "Then throwing away the book saying it is excellent", added the author and there was a roar of laughter.

Louis Fischer stayed with Gandhi for a week. During one of his interviews, Gandhi came to his hut for the interviews and lay down on his bed and said, "I will take your blow lying down." A woman gave him a mud pack for his abdomen. Gandhi added "This puts me in touch with my future."

At the lunch hour Gandhi said to Louis Fischer, "Give me your bowl and I will give you some vegetables". The journalists replied that he did not want them for he did not like their taste. "Ah", Gandhi exclaimed, "You must add plenty of salt and

lemon.” “You want me to kill the taste.” “No, to enrich the taste”. “You are so non-violent you would not even kill a taste.” “If that were the only thing men killed, I would not mind”, remarked Gandhi.

Gandhi could crack jokes even when seriously ill. About a fortnight before his death, during his last long fast, his doctors had become very nervous about him. One day Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy entered his room and Gandhi greeted him with a smile and said, “My enemy No. 1 has come.”

At another occasion he wrote, “Though the doctors say that the blood pressure is high, I noticed no effects of it. And ‘three doctors’ and three instruments gave three different readings yesterday : 200, 180, 160. What is one to do when doctors differ?”

A doctor friend of Gandhi had lost his teeth. Pulling his leg, Gandhi wrote, “What a shame, a doctor becomes toothless, as I am. When doctors become ill, in whom should we have faith?”

On May 29, 1923 Gandhi visited Santiniketan. On his arrival he was escorted to a flower decked room. Gandhi asked, “Why bring me to the bridal chamber ? Where is the bride ?” Tagore replied with a smile, “Santiniketan, the ever young queen of our hearts, welcomes you.” “But surely, she would hardly care to look twice at the old toothless pauper that I am”, said Gandhi.

Once he reached a meeting very late and thoroughly tired. He said, “I am glad that the address to me has been taken as read. I wish that my speech be also taken as made, though, of course, the purse to me cannot be taken as given.”

Once Gandhiji was writing with a pencil when an Englishman asked Him “How is your health ?”. Quick came the reply. “Middling like this pencil”. And he showed the word “Middling”, printed on his pencil to the visitor.

During Gandhi's stay in London in 1931, the celebrated movie comedian Charlie Chaplin called on him. Chaplin was surprised to learn that Gandhi had not heard about him. But this did not matter; for the next half an hour it was Gandhi who kept the comedian laughing.

The humour of Rajaji and Gahdhi was instant and contagious. It was charged with warmth for their fellow beings. This it was that kept them young right till the end.

The Greatest Blow

On August 15, 1947, when India became free, Gandhi refused to attend the celebrations in the capital. He was roaming in Calcutta in an endeavour to wipe every tear from every eye. But even his presence could not quell the communal riots. So the Mahatma decided to fast "unto death" or till Calcutta returned to sanity. The effect of his fast was magical. Within seventy three hours, Calcutta had returned to sanity, and on September 4, the leaders of all communities in the city brought him a signed pledge promising to maintain peace in the city. Then Gandhi broke the fast. There had been riots at various places in the country but Calcutta kept the promise.

In the meanwhile violence had erupted in the Punjab and Gandhi left Calcutta to proceed to Punjab. But when he reached Delhi in September 1947, the city was in the grip of communal riots. "Into this chaos of fear and terror came this

little man in the loin cloth to bring courage to the frightened, comfort to the afflicted and sanity to the frenzied."

On his birthday, October 2, he said, "There is nothing but anguish in my heart.....I cannot live while hatred and killing mar the atmosphere."

In an evening prayer at Delhi he said, "It makes my brain reel to think how this can be. Such a happening is unparalleled in the history of the world, and it makes me, as it should make you, hang my head in shame."

Gandhi decided to stay in Delhi for he "felt that he could not go elsewhere so long as the capital was not safe for all citizens. "If Delhi goes, India goes, and with that the last hope of world peace," he said. He decided to fast unto death or until Delhi was at peace,

The fast started on January 13, 1948 for peace in Delhi,

"God sent me the fast," he said. He asked people not to worry about him and to "turn the searchlight inward."

This last fast as usual had a magical effect. Within a week, on January 18, the principal leaders of Hinduism "pledged to protect the life, property and faith of the Muslims and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again" Gandhi then broke the fast by accepting a glass of orange juice from a Muslim friend amidst the chanting of passages from the various scriptures of the world. Before breaking his fast he had told the signatories of peace pledge that if they did not honour the pledge, he would fast unto death.

After the fast communal violence showed signs of ebbing. But there were many fanatic Hindus who felt that Hinduism was menaced by Islam from without and by Gandhi from within. They wanted to do away with Gandhi so that they could take their revenge from the Muslims. A fanatic youth, Madanlal, a refugee from the West Pakistan threw a bomb on the second day after the fast while Gandhi was addressing his evening prayers. Fortunately it missed the mark. Gandhi sat

unmoved and took no notice of the explosion. He called the bomb thrower a misguided youth and asked the police not to molest him.

Next day he referred to the congratulations which he had received for remaining unruffled after the explosion. He would deserve them, he said, "if I fall as a result of such an explosion and yet retain a smile on my face and no malice against the assailant".

After the bomb incident the police wanted to check each and every person who came to attend the prayer meeting. But Gandhi would not agree. "If I have to die," he told the police officers, "I should die at the prayer meeting. You are wrong in believing that you can protect me from harm. God is my protector."

Ten days after the bomb incident on January 30, 1948, Gandhi came out of the Birla House to join the prayer meeting. He was late by a few minutes having been detained by a conference with the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He loved punctuality and was sorry that he had kept the people waiting. 'I am late by ten minutes,' he murmured 'I should be here at the stroke of five.' He lifted his hands and joined them together to greet the crowd that was waiting. Many people rose, some bowed low in reverence. Just at that moment a young Hindu from Poona—Nathuram Vinayak Godse—edged his way forward and bowed before him to do obeisance and fired three point-blank shots. Gandhi died uttering the words 'He Ram' (Oh God)

Thus died the apostle of non-violence a violent death and that too at the hands of one of his own people. Gandhi was murdered to clear the obstacle to violence but his martyrdom achieved peace and not war. His sacrifice converted the hearts of the people and they realized the futility of fanatic communalisms. He achieved by his death what he could not achieve in his life-time-Hindu-Muslim amity. An admirer has aptly said, Gandhiji's martyrdom pulled back the sub-continent from the brink of total disaster, which was a certainty if the madness had

not been arrested, and gave the country an opportunity to concentrate on the problems of the country, present unhampered by the religious antagonisms of the past. His whole life was a *Yajan*, sacrifice, and in the end he offered it up so that out of the past a new, more humane society might come to birth in India.

The then Prime Minister Jawharlal Nehru paid a glowing tribute. He said, "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere and I do not quite know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader Bapu was, as we call him, the father of our nation, is no more... The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that illuminated this country for these many years will illuminate this country for many more years and a thousands years later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it, and it will give solace to innumerable hearts "

On the death of his Master, Rajaji said, "So it is all over !

"This world feels so empty ! Dreadfully empty !

"The bird escaped at 5 p m., on Friday, 10th January.

"The body remained with us and the lingering smile on the face kept the illusion going for some time. But on Saturday, the 31st January, on the banks of Jamuna, we consigned the body of our beloved leader to the flames in accordance with the wisdom of our ancestors. Then we scraped together all that was left behind. Devotion made us see Bapu in the ashes and the orphaned people fondly held on to the thought. But the solemn wisdom of our ancestors again called us to consign the ashes to the elements and turn our thoughts to God. So we have entrusted the ashes to Holy Ganga and prayed. And we are returning home with heavy hearts feeling a void all around. May our thoughts every day, at the hour when Bapu fell, turn to him, our beloved teacher, our *Ajatashatru*, our *Satyadharmaparkramah* who, to countless, millions was an unfailing physician, who removed fear and ever sought to increase love.

"May all men and women in India, everyday at five in the evening, recall the scene of assembled men and women waiting

for Bapu to join them, recall the dear face and contemplate on what he wished and prayed for. Let us everyday thus spend a couple of minutes at that hour in the evening in silence and prayer for universal goodwill in India. Even our grief tends to find solace and shape in anger and violence. Eternal must be our vigilance against this original sin which poisons our natures. Suppression and State-coercion cannot be avoided in this imperfect world. But let us clearly and once for all realize that goodwill cannot be achieved except by goodwill. Evil cannot be overcome except in the way that our beloved leader taught, There is much war-like talk about peace and much belligerent demand for goodwill. But fire cannot be quenched by pouring oil on it. May we remember the wisdom of love which our departed leader has left us for an inheritance—his teaching and the memory of the life he lived.

“The *Harijan* was Bapu’s voice. And when his body has been consigned to the elements, the *Harijan* cannot go on. Any attempt to continue it must take a different shape.

“The *Harijan* cause has been placed on such solid foundation and the battle has been so completely won that there need be no fear or anxiety on account of Bapu’s death in regard to the future of the *Harijans* as such. They will share with us the grief and the anxieties of the nation. But they may depend on it that India can never go back upon the teachings of Gandhiji.”

On the occasion of Gandhi’s first death anniversary, Rajaji wrote in the *Harijan* “We have all watched rockets go up and blaze into stars and then disappear. We keep looking at the sky for a time then, but all is void. So has Bapu disappeared. He burst into great glory twelve months ago and disappeared leaving us gazing at the sky, seeing black spots where it was glory. It was towards the end of 1947 when India was free but afflicted with dire misfortune and distemper, misfortune and distemper of a sort which caused an anguish of mind to Bapu, the like of which even he had not been prepared for. It was then he burst into his full glory.

“I had admired and loved him throughout twenty-eight rich years of intimate joint labour, as never man admired and loved

another. But it was in the last months of 1947 that my wonderment and adoration of Bapu rose to its highest pitch.

“Do you agree with me ? Do you accept the doctrine of unilateral effort in love ?” he asked me one day.

‘There is no other way’ I answered enthusiastically and without hesitation.

‘Just so’, he replied with evident delight. He always felt acute pleasure when I agreed. This is no compliment to me !

“What about the response ?” ‘The other party does not cooperate and what good is it ?’—All these questions simply disappeared as irrelevant and the road was straight.

“Bapu’s theory of life and action was always this, and some of us knew it, but never before was the full meaning and intensity of faith so fully poured into the doctrine as now Bapu did incessantly and unweariedly.

“The rocket burst on January 30, 1948, and what a glorious illumination ! It is all dark now and we see the opposite of the colours that dazzled our eyes then.

Do we believe in God ? If we do, we have no clearer visible manifestation of Him than love,—the love of mother, of child, of man, or of beast or bird for its young one, the tenderness of friends or of lovers. In the bodies of living beings we have been taught that God lives and finds habitation. If that be true, we see Him manifest whenever we see kindness, helpfulness, sympathy, compassion, or love in any form flowing from one to another. When love disappears, the window is closed against God. And let us see God in Love. All will be well yet though we have great troubles.

“Non-violence’, ‘civil disobedience’, etc. are all technical specialized phrases. The basic teaching is unilateral effort in love. *Prem* is an *avatar* of God within us. May our thoughts, words and actions be saturated in *Prem*. Every act of unilateral love and helpfulness is a *shraddha* ceremony for Bapu.

To Rajaji, Gandhi was an apostle of love and truth. He was a man of God. When the foreigners termed Gandhi as an

inventor of satyagraha Rajaji was pained. Rajaji contributed an article in *Mahatma Gandhi ; 100 years* which was brought out on the occasion of Gandhi Birth Centenary and pointed out in that article, "Leaders of men abroad have admired Gandhiji as one who developed an effective new "technique" has led to error and of course disappointment. Non-violence is not a gadget to get what we used to try to get through violence and much trouble in the pre-Gandhian days, as we get cooking energy from electricity instead of from coal or wood fuel. Mahatma Gandhi's "technique" is no doubt the presentation of Love and Truth in any confrontation against evil. But love and truth are not available in the market. We cannot procure them as we can procure rifles and pistols. They can issue only out of faith in God."

He added, 'The *Gita* tells us that the Lord dwells in the hearts of every being and by His power moves all beings who are set like marionettes on the machine. The secret presence of God in the hearts of all beings is the secret of satyagraha. It was not the application of a new technique but the understanding of ancient spiritual teaching and firm faith in its truth. Satyagraha is not for the sceptic, not for one who is content with the phenomenal world and the careful classification of what one sees in that world, which is called science. It may be a beautiful fountain-pen. But if there is no ink in it, or if you fill it only with 'water the pen can't write. Let us, while celebrating Gandhiji's Birth Centenary, reflect and realize his true teaching and the true lessons of his work and not look at him as a mere inventor of a cheap gadget to displace an old troublesome way. Gandhiji was not an inventor. He was a man of God, and therefore was he called Mahatma."

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